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RIQUET OF THE TUFT

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RIQUET OF THE TUFT.

Brooke, Stopford Augustus

RIQUET OF THE TUFT:

A LOVE DRAMA.

S. A. Brooke.

London:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1880.

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RIQUET OF THE TUFT.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A wide garden looking to the south, with grassy spaces and many flowers and trees, and beyond it a wood, over which a mountain range is seen. The KING'S PALACE *runs the whole length of the garden to the north, and has in front a broad terrace which leads by steps into the garden. The* PALACE *is on an upland, which falls on the west, through dells and broken ground, to the plain below; and in the east, the scene is filled with a lake at the head of which is a grove of stone-pines. It is the first day of May.*

Enter with tools GARDENER *and* ROBERT, *his son.*

GARDENER.

A CHILL morning, Robert; the frost has touched the leaves.

ROBERT.

Aye, father, the flowers are sad, but what a sheet of dew is on the lawn. It looks like a silver sea; and listen to the lark, how he soars and sings, he cannot tell all his joy.

[*PRINCE RIQUET appears on the terrace.*

GARDENER.

A happy bird, Robert; I wish Prince Riquet were as happy. See, there he is on the terrace. How slowly he walks, with his hands behind his hump, and his eyes on the ground. Life has been hard to him, for who will marry him? The kingdom wants an heir, and all the princesses hide their faces when they see him.

ROBERT.

If they would only wait and hear him talk they would forget he was so ugly; but they run away at once. Is it true, father, that the fairy Gentilla took pity on the Queen in her trouble and gave the little prince the gift of wit and pleasing more than other men? It would seem so, for we all love him.

GARDENER.

Yes, quite true. I never told you the story, for till quite lately we were not allowed to speak of it. I was in the withdrawing-

room with flowers for the Queen's chamber when the fairy came, and I heard all the women wailing over the cradle, and the King pacing to and fro, and now and then the weak cry of the Queen. Suddenly, a hush fell on the house, and I saw the fairy pass swiftly through the room where I was, and I heard her soothe the Queen. Her voice was like the silver lute the Prince plays on at evening by the lake, and her clothes were like the glittering moonshine, and her face was like pity and joy. And when she spoke all the world smiled and grew happy. She took, they told me, the little child in her arms, and touched its eyes and breast, and breathed upon it. "Fear not," she said, and she came with the babe to the Queen's bedside. "I will care for your son. He shall be happy and beautiful when he comes to love and be loved, and he shall be wise and witty even in sorrow, and gay and kind to all, and he shall be able to make the woman who loves him as wise and witty and pleasant as himself." And when she had said that she flitted away.

ROBERT.

I wish I had seen her ; you were lucky, father.

GARDENER.

More lucky than the Prince, for no one can love him in that way, and he does not care for any of the princesses he has seen. I have heard him say that no woman is so beautiful as those he

sees in dreams, and he wanders and dreams all day. There is not a nook in the neighbouring wood that does not know him like a friend. And he is dreaming now as he walks.

ROBERT.

He used to be happier when he was a boy, and his face was always bright.

GARDENER.

Yes, he saw things, even as a babe, we could not see: I think Gentilla opened his eyes. And in his childhood all the little people were his playmates. Then when he grew older his mother gave her life to him, and he loved to be beloved, and friends came round him, and he was so full of beautiful sayings that he surprised them into forgetfulness of his looks. But he is changed of late.

ROBERT.

Good troth, he is. He does not hunt as he used. He never cared for the chase and only went to please the King, but he drew a good bow and couched his boar-spear like a man.

GARDENER.

For all his dwindled body, he's as brave as a lion, and it pleased the King to have him in the forest. But last year, about

this time, he changed. Something came over him. I remember the day he came back from the pine grove at the head of the lake with a lost look in his eyes. I met him and said I hoped he was not ill. "Not ill," he said, "but I have seen a spirit," and since that day he has never been the same man. And see, how lonely he looks and sad, 'tis pitiful; you remember the song we used to sing to him when he was a boy—he made us teach it to his nurse—the Flower-Song?

ROBERT.

What! the song our Court poet made who died so young? He loved flowers, and he loved the Prince. He told my mother one day when she pitied the Prince for being so ill-favoured that he thought him beautiful.

GARDENER.

I remember, I remember; it was a wonder. I heard him say once that to love anything was to make it beautiful. I knew what he meant when I found a cluster of hemlocks growing on your little sister's grave. I used to hate them and cut them down with my spade. Now I'm ready to cry when I see them. We have had no poet since like him.

ROBERT.

It was sad, being so wise, that he died so soon. But sing the

song, father; perhaps it will cheer the Prince. The air is clear in the frost, and he will hear us on the terrace.

GARDENER (*sings*).

Roses in whose scented bed
Oberon lays his curly head;
Myrtles, whence the plaintive dove
Wooes carnations red with love;
Pansies, full of thoughts they tell
To the lilies near the well;
Tulips, in whose royal cup
Starry dews are gathered up;—
All the flowers in gardens born,
Bid my lady-love good morn.

See, he lifts his head, he is listening.

ROBERT.

He stops in his walk. We sang that song to him for the first time when we carried him fifteen springs ago to the great slope under the trees where from top to bottom the blue hyacinth was like a sky fallen upon the earth. He clapped his small hands together with joy and said every flower was singing with all its might. And when we had sung, he fell into thoughtfulness and did not speak for a long time. I shouldn't wonder now, if

as he listens, he saw that flowery slope, and his friend the poet, his old nurse, and all his childhood's days.

GARDENER.

That is what music does. There is a ballad my mother sings which makes me think of the day I was lost in the wood fifty years ago. I was five years old then, and yet when she sings it I am only five years old and a lost child again. Soft, he begins to walk again. Sing the next verse.

ROBERT (*sings*).

Snowdrops, drooping with the stress
Of the winter's barrenness;
Violets, dark as Love's wild eyes
Dreaming through his memories;
Daffodils by rivers old,
Broom that burns from wold to wold;
Primrose, virgin of the spring,
Dim bluebells, and daisy-ring;—
All the flowers the fields adorn,
Bid my maiden-love good morn.

GARDENER.

See, Robert, we have unearthed him, he is coming down to us. Sing the chorus cheerily, welcome him with it.

Both sing.

Song has drawn her from her nest;
See! she flies to seek my breast!
Violets dream within her eyes,
And her lips with love are wise;
All her thoughts and feeling fine
Are as sweet as eglantine;
Lily-white and tall she goes,
On her cheek the thornless rose.—
Fairies that in flowers dwell,
Make my darling love me well.

Enter RIQUET.

Good morning, men, I thank you for your song;
It touched the note of memories that still
Wander like children through the fields of youth.
How fare your flowers? The morning air strikes keen,
And the young buds that swell within their sheath,
May get a touch awry—as I have done.
Look not so grave; all things are seasoned by
Custom and Time, and I have much within
That makes me bear a strange outside in peace.

GARDENER.

We are your happy servants, Sir; our love
Is only grave because we see you sad.

RIQUET.

Not sad, but full of thought; for thought doth wear
The circumstance of sorrow, and my life
Moves in a cloud of dreams that think of dreams,
And dreams are never gay; but now the light
Is on the Eastern hills, and it were wrong
To think of pain upon so bright a morn;
The sun is going upward in his strength,
And drinks the dew, and through the fields of heaven
The wind, like a rejoicing river, streams,
And on it sail the clouds like stately ships,
And the wild lark and all the choir of rooks
Make merry in the sunlight and the wind;
The air is young, and loves itself.
Is it
The hedge of eglantine whose odour falls
Like music on the sense?

GARDENER.

No Sir, the wind
Blows from the grove of hawthorn in the dell

Where the fairy rings are green; it flowered last night
To hail the May, and when I passed it by
This morn, so thick the showery blossoms were
They hid the leaves like snow.

RIQUET.

Not thicker than
This sward is with the daisies, sown like stars
Over the lawns of night.

Where are the flowers
I bade you seek, young violets whose eyes
The wind of morning loves? My mother sits
In the low sunlit room that fronts the park,
And plays the virginals: you know her use—
To marry flowers with music and enlarge
The sound with scent and colour. Winter hears,
At eve, her voice, but when the Spring unbinds
The frozen earth, she sings at morn, and then
The thrush might envy her—so pure her notes,
But purest when the violets come again
To sweeten all the woods. Go, search them out;
Upon the mossy bank beneath the oaks,
Near to the arbour, where the linnets build,
The earth is glad of them. Bring those to me.

GARDENER.

Deep in the wood it lies, I know the place :
Before the lark drops down upon her nest,
I'll bring them, steeped in balm and morning dew.

[*Exeunt* GARDENERS.

RIQUET (*alone*).

How well the ancient honour of our house
Shows in these simple folk. They pity me,
But in their pity is no stain of scorn.
My servants love me; and my father's love
Keeps true; but the half-anger of a king—
To whom the gods have given clean limbs and strong—
With a dwarfed heir, makes rough his tenderness;
I hurt his eye. More is my mother's love,
Who paints my image in her heart of hearts
And makes it beautiful; she would not change
Her crooked son against the straightest prince
In the whole of faeryland. Great love is mine.
But I have no content; Gentilla's gift,
The architect Imagination, builds
Among the unquiet valleys of my heart
Gardens and palaces where dimly walks
The woman whom I have not known but love.

Only in sleep, or in the dream-like hours
I wander through the woods, I see her move,
O faery-fair, through cedarn alleys high,
And run to meet her, but when I draw near,
Her image dies as dies upon the lake
The image of the stone pine on the point
When a cloud steals the sun. Shadow of love!
Take substance, live, break thy dead silence, speak,
And tell me who thou art, and what the place
Thou mak'st a world, that I may make thee mine.
Fool, fool, to cheat my broken life with words,
And talk of Heaven while I crawl on earth,
A crooked scornful mockery of a man;
What woman can love me? Misshapen Fate
Has cursed me with a heart that longs for love,
Shut in a body that all love abhors.
Fair soul should have fair form. O misery!
Despair and loneliness be mine for ever!

ROBERT is heard singing in the wood.

Song has drawn her from her nest;
See, she flies to seek my breast!

RIQUET.

Hark he returns and sings that happy song
Of love and life.

ROBERT (*still singing*).

Violets dream within her eyes,
And her lips with love are wise.

RIQUET.

O Love, be wise for me,
Let me be sad no more. Be in me the Spring.
Awaken hope from sorrowing sleep, and fill
Her eyes with sun and shower, until my life
Burst into joy, as the loud-thrilling lark
That high in heaven, and lost in light, pours forth
A song of triumph. And O—there gleams my dream—
The long dark avenue of ilex trees,
And in it, my belovèd, pure and white,
Fluttered around by doves. She turns and smiles;
Speak, speak, I follow thee to death.

[*He rushes forward.*

Enter ROBERT.

My Prince,
I bring the flowers—but you are strangely moved;
Your hand is trembling and your eyes are dim.

RIQUET.

It is nothing, it will pass; give me the flowers.

ROBERT.

I think the fairy court kept revel near them,
They smell so sweetly; all last night the moon
Shone like the sun.

RIQUET.

There was no court last night;
The midnight hour was cold, and when the frost
Pinches the earth, the fairy folk keep house.
But with the rising of the sun, I saw
Gentilla, with a sun-ray in her hand,
Healing the bitten flowers; and she has touched
These violets, and turned their frost to dew.
Where is your father, why are you alone?

ROBERT.

He met a shepherd who brought pleasant news.

RIQUET.

News! what news? Speak.

ROBERT.

Your Highness knows the glade,
Where the footpath among the beeches dips
To reach the valley and the red-roofed town;
'Twas there we met the shepherd, and he said
The town was full of pleasure; all the children
Cheering in street and square; the market-place
Gay with the women prankt in fine array,
And smiling like the sun on village inns;
While all the men had left their work to give
A welcome to the favourite of the town.

RIQUET.

Has Lanval then come back, the painter?

ROBERT.

Yes;
Suddenly this morning there he stood and sang,
Close by the fountain in the market-place,
Listening it drip, his arm upon its rim,
All the full sunlight in his chestnut hair,
And singing like a nightingale. They say
He has had strange adventures, and he comes
To-day to tell them to their Majesties.

RIQUET.

I am glad to see him. Well—; a well-made man,
A gay, quick-minded, feeling gentleman,
Who has eyes and uses them. I will see him;
Robert, good day. [*Exit* ROBERT.
Perhaps he brings my fate.
I am of that temper now that everything
Seems fateful to me—Would that I could sleep!
[*Looking at the violets.*
They were asleep; each with its drooping head
Nestled in leaves. Why did I spoil their life
To give a fleeting pleasure? No one broke
On their sweet solitude as all the world
On my impatience—Here is the gardener
Full of his tidings.

Enter GARDENER.

Prince you will pardon me—

RIQUET (*interrupting*).

You have seen Sir Lanval, does he come this way?

GARDENER.

Seen him, Prince Riquet, no! I have heard him sing
Among the orchard meadows near the town,

A song so rich that even the blackcap hushed
Its garrulous delight; and in the wood,
Where now he is, climbing from ledge to ledge
To reach this place, the thrush and blackbird are
Still as a stone—Listen—I hear him now.

RIQUET.

'Tis well, I'll speak with him alone; good day.

[*Exit* GARDENER.

LANVAL is heard singing below the scene, and his voice grows gradually louder. RIQUET walks towards the edge of the garden where the wooded hill descends to the plain, and listens to the song.

LANVAL (*sings*).

Winter cold is dead and laid
In his grave beneath the yew;
March and April, boy and maid,
Sleep beneath the mournful dew;
O farewell—for May is here,
May, the darling of the year.

Children, fly to field and grove,
All the flowers are wild with mirth;

Youths, it is the time when love
Makes a garden of the earth:
Maids, be kind—for May is here,
May, the darling of the year.

RIQUET.

Cease, cease, sweet song, to burn and break my heart.

LANVAL (*singing, but nearer*).

Streams are rushing from the hills,
Corn and leaves in wind are moving,
Clouds are flying, Nature thrills
With the rapture of her loving,
And her life—O, May is here,
May, the darling of the year.

RIQUET.

Rapture and love and life—Words, only words!
When shall I clasp, with passion made more deep
By years of vain and terrible desire,
The living, loving body of my dreams!
Would I were dead, so I could be no more
Devoured by fruitless fire.—He sings again.

LANVAL (*still nearer*).

In the morn the larks rehearse,
With the happy thrush, the tale
Of the joyful universe,
And at eve, the nightingale.
Tirra-lirra, May is here,
May, the darling of the year.

RIQUET.

That was a nearer strain, I hear his step
Brush through the beechen leaves—

Enter LANVAL *springing through the fringe of wood.*

Lanval, welcome!
How gaily like a bird you hail the May.

LANVAL.

No wonder, 'tis a glorious day! But you,
My Prince, I trust are well, and feel the world
Sing in your heart.

RIQUET.

I am not well, and song
Is dead within me.

LANVAL.

What sorrow's this—

RIQUET.

Nothing;
A passing mood of pain, too light, too fleeting,
To give a friend the burden of it.

LANVAL.

Nay,
You are changed; your eyes are worn and deeper set,
And darklier coloured, and I see the lines
That sleepless longing makes. Hunger of heart
Has wasted you; your cheek is pale, your mouth
Trembles with pain that, on expression's verge,
Lacks its relief.

RIQUET.

You painters are keen eyed
To read the book of the face—but can you see
The heart within, storm-wearied, where the rain
Falls evermore, and that wild ocean-strand,
Where the rich argosies of youth are wrecked,
And all our hopes, their goodly crew, lie cold,

Frighting the mind with those unburied eyes
That are the hate of solitude. Can art
Give shape to that, or cunning colour shew
The ghastly sunset, and the ragged drift
Of thunder-clouds above it?—
I am a fool
To think that words can help—
Pray, pardon me:
Leave me awhile to bear this passion down
Before I see the Queen. She must not read
Trouble below my eyelids—Go to her
And say I bring her violets that May
Has sweetened with her breath—She waits my coming—
But she will welcome you, her friend, and mine.

LANVAL.

I am sorry, Prince, my musick clashed with you,
Too gay, and jarred your mood.

RIQUET.

Too gay! O no!
I have not enough of life. I pray you, laugh,
Talk, smile, make merriment, and sing, until
This dreary palace be inspirited.

LANVAL.

That suits my humour, ever bright, and now
Brighter in May. Prince, we shall meet again.

[*Exit, singing as he goes.*

Midst of all I come and go,
Far more full of joy than they:
Through my heart their feelings flow;
I myself am always May—
How much more, now May is here,
May, the darling of the year.

RIQUET (*alone*).

"I myself am always May."
O God, the difference in men! Not May,
But storm and rain of March are in my heart.

[*Exit* RIQUET.

SCENE II.

A Room in the PALACE. *The* QUEEN *is sitting alone near the window that looks over the park. A side window with a deep recess opens upon the garden. Instruments and books of music are scattered about.*

QUEEN.

HOW fair the morning lies upon the world!
So fair lay hope and love upon my heart
When I was young. Ah me, for weary years
Sorrow walks gravely through my life, and now
My son, in whom I live, is found of Love,
But cannot find his love, and he will waste
Day after day, until the cruel God
Lead him to death, and with him I shall die.—
Love does not kill the young. I did not die
When all my joy sank like a stone, and the sea
Covered it evermore. The soft west wind,
Whose breath is the enchantment of desire,
Blew yesterday, and its memorial wings,
Fanning my heart, brought back the days when I
Went with my knight among the dells of June,

And knew immortal joy. O morn of life,
When first romance befell me, and the woods
And blowing hills and river-bank were bathed
In passion's warm sunrise, as hand in hand,
Forgetting all, we loved;—exulting songs
Broke from my lips, but oftentimes I sang
Wild airs of sorrow and pain, for then it pleased—
So happy were our days—to play with grief,
As April with her storms: and one of these
Haunts me to-day. In mood and menace gay
I sang it then, but the sweet lies of youth
Become the bitter truths of after years—
I'll sing it now, although I fear to sing,
In its wild fatefulness, my Riquet's doom.

She sings.

Young Sir Guyon proudly said
Love shall never be my fate.
'None can say so but the dead,'
Shrieked the witch wife at his gate.

'Go and dare my shadowed dell,
Love will quell your happy mood.'
Guyon, laughing his farewell,
Rode into the faery wood.

There he met a maiden wild,
By a tree she stood alone;
When she looked at him and smiled—
At a breath his heart was gone.

In her arms she twined him fast,
And like wax within the flame,
Melted memory of the past,
Soul and body, name and fame.

Late at night the steed came back,
Where's our good knight, cried his men;
Far and near they sought his track,
But Guyon no one saw again.

QUEEN.

My music fails for flowers. Where is my son,
Who brings me violets scented with his love,
Sweet as his eyes? When he was born I wept,
Until I knew the infant touch that makes
Home in a mother's heart; Oh, I have sorrowed—
Yet love is gladness though it sorrow much,
And mine for him is deep as midnight skies.
I love him for the sadness of his fate,
And for his care of me, but most of all

Because he is my very child I love him;
There is no reason any one can give
For which I do not love him. Yet my heart
Contents no more his heart, and I have seen
Pain and its thought upon his face of late,
The pain of hopeless fancy, such as I
Had long ago—before I knew the King.

Enter KING RIQUET.

What, Constance, no music? Weary of your virginals, weary of life, it seems. In truth, you have no right to look so woe-begone. It is too fair a day for fancies; put them by.

QUEEN.

My sadness is your fancy; or if I am sad, it is because I have not seen my son to-day.

KING.

Not to see him is nothing to regret. I love the boy, but I do not love his looks. I used to shut my eyes while he talked, because his figure spoilt his wit; and then—for he talked well—I pictured him tall as a lance and straight, and with a face a woman could smile on—such as I had when I wooed you, Constance. It was sorrow enough to open my eyes then, when he was gay as well as witty; it is dreadful now, for he seems

more misshapen than ever since he is moon-struck with melancholy. He goes through the corridors like a ghost in pain, and the arras sways with his sighing. By Oberon, it's a sorry business. No woman will ever care for the boy: I shall never have a grandson, nor the kingdom an heir. The race of Riquet will die out.

QUEEN.

I am a woman and I care for him.

KING.

O yes, you are his mother and you cannot help it. But he will not find natural affection in a young princess, and no ugly one will content him. He has impossible dreams—I have heard them in his songs—and they have no substance anywhere. He wants something lovelier than the earth holds, and his very ugliness makes him long for beauty. Were it not for my hunting, and that I sleep well, I think my heart would break with trouble.

QUEEN.

I hope then, you hunt to-day; I know your Majesty slept well. As to Riquet, do not break your heart about him; Gentilla loves him and will take care of him.

KING.

I hope so, but as yet her gift has only been his bane. Had he been dull he might have married long ago. But he has ideas—the worst property a man can have. There was the Princess Margaret—she would have had him because she was proud to be queen of this country. There was the Princess Grisell—she would have had him because she was poor. There was the Princess Matilda—she would have had him because nobody would have her. But they were all ill-favoured, and he wouldn't look at them. I shall never have a grandson.

QUEEN.

And I think him right. Better die unmarried than not marry whom you love.

KING.

Very true—a woman's truth. I think of the kingdom. But I hear the horns in the courtyard; that is music a man's heart dances to, and there go the hounds, peal under peal, like the laughter of girls in May.

QUEEN.

'Tis well you have no daughters, else you might smart for the comparison.

KING.

I wish I had daughters; I love daughters. They would hunt with me, and be as gay as the trees and streams. Why not come with me to-day and make me happy; you were made to enjoy the forest. The Chase is as bright and fresh as my life when I was young, the copses ring with the songs of the birds, all the spring flowers are hung with dew, there is pleasure in the heart of the wood. It is better there than moping here, and the music of the river is worth all your songs. Come, I will take care of you.

QUEEN.

I cannot come, my heart is too heavy, and the noise jars me. But I wish you a happy day.

KING.

Then I will go and forget my trouble, and when I come back your humour will be brighter. Have you seen the garden, have you tasted the air? The sun has melted the light frost, and the scent will lie as thick as the dew; it is a lovely morning [*going to the window*]. Guess, Constance, who is coming over the garden! Why, Lanval, our sunny painter! Shall we see him here. he will amuse me more than the hunt. Autumn and winter have gone since he left us, and he will be full of tales.

QUEEN.

Yes, bring him here, but send for Riquet; I want him, and you can shut your eyes when he comes lest your heart should break.

KING.

Madam, you mock me unduly: I love my son.

Enter SERVANT.

Lanval, the Court artist, begs that their Majesties will receive him.

KING.

Bid him come in. [*Enter* LANVAL.

QUEEN.

You bring the sunlight with you, Lanval; I give you welcome.

KING.

And I. But what is your news, why did you stay away so long? You look well and brown. What have you painted? I see you have your books with you. Whom have you seen, have you had any adventures, have you fallen in love at last? Come, tell the whole tale from the beginning. Let it be long, for I want amusement. The Queen sings and plays all day, and it makes me

melancholy ; and Riquet does nothing but mope, and that makes me mad. Begin now ; immediately.

QUEEN.

Wait at least till the Prince is here. Your story, Lanval, may brighten his eyes, and you know he loves you well.

LANVAL.

I met the Prince in the garden ; he is coming in, laden with violets.

Enter RIQUET *with flowers.*

I bring them, mother, drenched with fairy dew,
And they will wake your music. I am late,
But they were deep in the wood. [*Aside*] O deeper still
The sickness that lies close about my heart !

QUEEN.

My son, I thank you for your love and flowers,
They are both kind to me ; give me your hand—
Stand close to me, here in this dim recess,
Where I can see your face.

KING.

Now, Lanval, speak ;
I am impatience, tell your tale in verse,
And trippingly.

LANVAL.

Sire, the fair Titania—

KING.

Oh, no preambles, plunge into the story.

LANVAL.

The King shall have his will, but yet I like
To play with the beginning of a thing ;
A tale without a prologue is a house
Without a porch.
The day was lovely when I left the Court
And rode towards the hills ; the morning wind
Kept company with me, and all the poplars,
That bent like corn on either side the way,
Made sounds so sweet beneath its sweeping hand
That I was gay, and felt within the wind,
And one with all the motion of the trees,
So that I drove my horse along, and sang
With joy at my swift riding—till the noon

Clashed from the belfry of the little town
That lies deep nested 'twixt the mountain's knees;
And there I stayed three weeks—three pleasant weeks.

KING.

Three weeks! and pleasant weeks, 'tis very strange.
It is a sleepy village; once, unhorsed,
I spent two hours there, and I saw—nothing!
Why did you stay so long?

LANVAL.

I do not know.
It was my fancy. Yet perhaps I know.
For first, there was a pretty water-reach
Outside the walls, within an alder grove,
Where the hill stream grew quiet, and an island
In it, where herons had their nest and fished
The stealing river; this I drew—And then,
A lovely child lived there, my hostess' daughter,
Who sat to me and chatted like a wren
When June is over; then, I dined in the sun,
Under the vines; so I forgot the Court.

KING.

That is not courteous, Lanval, and as yet
I see no reasons for your long delay.

LANVAL.

They are my reasons, Sire; shall I give more?
There was a dovecote underneath the thatch,
With doves that changed their colour in the sun;
They pleased me, and I stayed. Among the flowers,
Midst of the garden, was a carven well
O'er whose cool shaft it pleasured me to lean,
And see my face a hundred feet below
In the dark water-glass. Around me laughed
The merry vintage, and I lingered on,
Gladdened to see, in vineyards white with sun,
Boys, maids, deep-stained, bring clusters to the vats,
And, round the glowing limbs of men whose songs
Rang joy, the life blood of the earth leap forth,
Itself rejoicing. That enriched my life.
Then lazy evening brought grey-bearded sires
To talk beneath the walnuts, and strong youths
That wrestled in a ring of laughing girls,
And, while the red moon shone, I loved to sit
Under the porch and sketch them, listening whiles
To the mountain cataracts that filled the air
With far faint thunder. I had peace of heart
And joy in all my labour. Do you need
More reasons? I was free, and wished to prove

My freedom real; lastly I was there,
And being there, I did not care to move.

QUEEN.

I wish the king, nay, I myself, could give
As many pleasant reasons when our fancy
Beckons to act.

KING.

Speak, Constance, for yourself.
I have one reason when I act—my will.

QUEEN.

One's will is not a reason: would it were!

KING.

Make it a reason; it is Lanval's way. [*Turns to him.*
Why, if all pleased you, did you ever leave?

LANVAL.

The weather changed and with it changed my mind;
And the rain fell and all the welkin roared
From east to west with thunder as I rode,
Slow climbing up the gorge, and heard below

The swollen river, like a beast of prey,
Howl louder than the thunder—and a darkness
Clutched at my heart. But I crept on and came
Where the gaunt cliffs had narrowed to a gate,
Through which I hardly passed, and found a plain
Full of marsh streams, winged-round by snow-streaked hills
And lonely as a broken heart. At last
I touched the summit of the pass, and lo!
The west was like a crystal water clear,
Behind me rolled the storm, and at my feet
An ancient forest seemed to fill the world.

RIQUET.

I wish I had been there.

KING.

So do not I—
Wet to the bone, lashed by the wind, and cold.
I hate the mountain tops. Nothing lives there
But the grey vulture and the whistling rat.

RIQUET.

O Sir, the loneliness of mountain peaks
Has its own life—and there are times when cold
Cannot be felt.

LANVAL.

They are very few; I know
I hurried downwards, scarcely pausing when
The altar of the purple forest flamed
Incense and sacrifice before the throne
Of the evening sun, and reached the wood and rode
Through the soft paths like flying fire, till night
Fell starless, and I found a hollow where
The earth was dry, and wearied out, I slept.

KING.

I wish I had been there, amongst the dews,
When the chill morning blew your sleep away.—
I would have roused the sleeping wood with horns,
And called Aurora from her saffron bed,
And blown a stirring welcome to her eyes—
'Tis life to think of it. How waked the forest?

LANVAL.

O King, you would have left your throne for joy.
The place was filled with beautiful wild things.
The routing of a boar awoke me, and I saw
The white-tusked patriarch break across the glade,
Leading his trotting train of dusky sons;

And through the lanes of the tall heath that rose
Above my horse's head, a troop of deer
Stepped daintily, and all the undergrowth
Rustled with life. The speckled snake stole forth
To sun his rings, at every step a hare
Flashed from its form, and on the sandy ridge,
Beside the glade, a thousand rabbits sat,
Each at his door and washed his face with dew.
Through the pine-tops—for all the wood was pines—
Grey, soaring straight, and huge, but spread above
In a mighty canopy, the pheasants flew,
And hailed the morn, and all the doves replied.

KING.

What king is he to whom this chase belongs?
I'll make a treaty with him.

QUEEN.

For what end?
To slay a harmless world! Poor piteous things,
They love to live, they suffer when they die
As much as we. I hate the hunt.

KING.

And I
Love it because it gives an edge to life.

We are too weary in this world to rest,
Unless we make unrest. These piteous things,
Know not our hunger: when they die, they die
Without a thought, and if a mighty king
Slay them, their death is noble.

RIQUET.

Death is death,
Whether a king or clown inflict its pain,
As bitter too.

LANVAL.

My Lord, the Prince forgets,
That savage beasts, made fierce by hunger's grip,
Hunt one another; then, why should not man,
The greater beast, made fierce by pleasure's sting,
Hound them to death? High pleasure is life's aim.

KING.

Lanval, you seem to scorn your kindly King;
It misbecomes you; say what next you saw.

LANVAL.

I stood uncertain, when a water-glint
Flashing among the pine-stems led me on,

And a few paces brought me to a mere—
A long dark water silver in the sun,
Fringed with tall reeds, and round it closed the pines
Like columned cliffs watching a quiet sea.
The wave was still, and in its lilied sheet
The silent darkness of the domèd woods
Glimmered a clear pale green, while the blue sky
Shone in mid depth, flecked with white clouds whose edge
The feet of morning crimsoned. Flocks of birds
Rose from the reeds, and flying to and fro,
Hunted their prey, and all the lonely pool
Rang with their crying.

RIQUET.

And had you no pleasure?
For all the world was happy in that place.

LANVAL.

Yes, I had joy, for the low sun was warm,
And life kept bridal in me, and the pines
Gave forth their incense so that all the wood
Seemed to pour forth thanksgiving to the morn.
But when my enchantment passed I knew too well
That I was hungry, and alone, and lost—
When suddenly I heard a noise of horns,

Baying of dogs, and horse-hoofs on the sward;
"It is the hunt," I cried, and as I spoke
A boar rushed by me, and a leash of dogs
Running like wind, and then a stately man
Couching his spear, and seeing him, I knew
It was the King, so noble was his look.
I leaped to horse and followed in his track;
He slew the boar, and ere his huntsmen came,
Serving his need, I told him all my tale,
And ever since I have lived within his Court.

KING.

It seems to have been pleasant, for you stayed
Far longer than I wished.

LANVAL.

O Sire, I found
My perfect beauty there, I could not leave.

RIQUET (*excitedly*).

Was she a woman lovely as the dawn
On summer mornings, whom to see is Love?
Then I have seen her.

KING.

When? the boy is mad!
No woman but your mother has been here,
And she is more like evening than the dawn.

QUEEN.

Truth is not always courteous, Sir, nor wise.

KING.

Constance, I love the evening like the dawn;
The wisdom of my life has been to love you,
And love is courteous.

QUEEN.

No, not always—Yet
I have found peace with you—but the tale waits.

LANVAL.

To see the Princess was to see a woman,
And not the dawn: to watch her was to know
Beauty itself, and perfect beauty kindles
Not love, but worship—so I laid my art,
Its power, myself, before her rosy feet.

QUEEN.

Who was this paragon ?

LANVAL.

The King's daughter.
Two daughters called him father—one this girl,
The home of beauty ; but the other plain,
The home of wit. I saw her once, but then
I ceased to see her ; had she had the wit
Of all the world, and all the wisdom hived
By foolish sages, I had never cared
To speak again to her. Yet all the Court
Hung on her words and left her sister by.
They told me she was dull, a lifeless stock,
A stupid, silent, thoughtless, thriftless thing !
What did I care ! I needed not her speech ;
A lovely woman is not made to talk with,
Nor yet to talk.

QUEEN.

For what then is she made ?
This is the very insolence of art !

LANVAL.

You cannot see. No insolence belongs
To worship of the beautiful, and I
Saw in the Princess—Beauty, not a woman.

QUEEN.

Describe her, let us see her with your eyes.

LANVAL.

Great Nature made her in a sunny hour
To teach the world the joy of loveliness;
Callista was her name, most beautiful.
Her eyes were music, and her changing cheek
Shamed the wild rose in June, and all the winds
Gave it, enthralled with love, their kiss; her mouth,
Curved like the bow of Oberon, oped within
On a gate of fairy pearl; her eloquent lips,
Ruddy and sweet as apples in October,
Invited taste, though none might dare to try;
From her low brow and stately head her hair
Flowed in a ripple, paused at her ear, then fell
A glorious golden torrent to her feet,
And on her throat and veiléd bosom glowed
A sunshine which they seemed themselves to make.

QUEEN.

Could any woman be as fair as that?

RIQUET (*aside*).

My dream, my dream!

LANVAL.

O Madam, she was more;
Tall, and enchanting heaven, she moved as if
She were the dwelling of the unchartered wind,
And in her the fine Spirit of grace took life;
The harmony that Nature only knows
When she does best, and Art delights to make,
Murmured through her like sea-sound through a shell.
I loved her beauty.

KING.

Did you love herself?

QUEEN.

Oh no! his talk has not the note of love;
It dwells on beauty not on beauty's life;
He knows the shell but not the fruit; be sure
It is the artist not the lover speaks.

RIQUET (*aside*).

My mother has keen insight, else I were
Jealous to break my heart; in every word
He paints my vision.

LANVAL.

Madam, I should know
From point to point the Princess, for I made
Her breathing image. The room in which we sat,
Where a deer-hunt ran riot round the walls
Done by the patient needle, opened on
A flower-inwoven meadow in whose midst
One pine rose sentinel, while all around
The silent forest dreamed. There hour by hour
I painted quietly until my heart
Was by her beauty rapt to perfect love
Of life, and of my art, of all the world.

RIQUET

Where is that portrait? Instant give it me.

LANVAL.

Prince Riquet!

RIQUET (*searching the books*).

Is it here, or here, O speak!
Have you no voice, no pity? See, I tremble
Like a lost child. O how my choking heart
Beats in my throat. I cannot stand, the room
Fades round me—oh—

QUEEN.

He faints! Riquet, Riquet,
Awake, shake off this passion, be a man!

KING.

It is the full of the moon, my son is mad.

QUEEN.

Call you this madness—were you never mad
In this way when you loved me long ago?
Had you not been as mad, I should despise
The memory of that time. Have you forgotten—
Can you not read the ancient trace of love?
If passionate love be madness, then indeed
Riquet is mad, but if it be the last,
The only touch of heaven left on earth,

Then he is wiser far than you or I,
Who have lost it now.

KING.

Not dimly I recall,
Constance, that golden time; but when my heart
Was hottest, then I did not faint, but rushed
Straight to your arms. This sickness is not love,
But feebleness of soul. His wits have made
His body weaker by their working, and in turn,
The body taking vengeance, slays the wits.
Gentilla gave but could not keep his brains.
[*He draws near* RIQUET *and looks at him.*
So sinks the last hope of the kingdom's heir:
Poor, fated boy, your life has been too hard.

RIQUET (*recovering*).

My father, I am well, this fit will pass;
You make too much of nothing strange to one
Whose soul keeps company more delicate
Than you can dream of. Could you have borne long years
Of pain and hopelessness and woman's scorn
As I have done? But I had glorious dreams,
Living in which I half forgot the fate
That earns your common pity. For my wits,

They shame the eagle's eye; were they less keen
I should have had less pain. O I have been
Much worn of late with brooding thought, and sleep
Nightly forgets me. I had wished for death
Were not hope kind, and had I not some youth.

KING.

Is this my Son? Prince, you forget yourself.

RIQUET.

No Sire, I stand upon the giddy edge
Of a world of love. One thought devours all thought,
One love all love. Lanval, you seem amazed,
But all my life is bound up in the span
Of one short answer. I must see that picture.

LANVAL.

I have it not, I gave it to the King;
He had done me kindness.

RIQUET.

Untoward kindness,
Miserable gift! There is no rest, no help,
And no forgetfulness.

LANVAL.

Prince, I can prove
Whether she be the lady of your dreams;
For in the wintertide when all the woods
Were hushed with snow, so deep we could not ride,
And the frost nipped the bone, she used to sit,
Tending the flying labour of the loom,
Among her maidens in a turret chamber,
Large, shadow-haunted, roofed with painted beams,
With seats around the deep-set hearth, where blazed
Huge tangled roots of pine, a mighty fire.
It was my wont to go there when the sun
Sank crimson o'er the frosty woods, and sent
Its last rays through the lattice to illume
Her gracious figure. She never spake a word,
But sometimes on the ruddy west she looked,
And sighed, and in her eyes dim longing dawned,
And her whole body listened—

RIQUET.

It was then
That you, enchanted, drew her. Give me the sketch,
Give it to me.

LANVAL.

Yes, often at that hour.
But, once, I caught her image perfectly.
Silent that eve we sat, for one had told
An old pathetic story of true love,
Till the edge of dark—when the great pile of logs
Suddenly fell, and the bright blaze leaped forth
And lit the Princess' face, and as I looked,
It seemed a fire leaped to life in her.
She stirred, a low faint smile dawned on her lips,
And broke to sudden sunshine, and she rose,
A silver pillar in the dusky room,
And beckoned with her hand, and cried aloud,
"Come ere I die!" and as she spoke she seemed
Dipped in celestial light. Brief as the flash
That lights a cloud, and shows its folds, and dies,
Love, rushing through her beauty like a fountain,
Filled it and made it tenfold fair; her maids
Rose round her like a flock of doves a hawk
Has startled, fluttering question and reply;
But she, as she had dreamt a foolish dream,
Brushed with her hand her brow and took again
The shuttle she had dropt, and all the light
Fled from her eyes; but I was quick, and ere
That ecstasy had gone, I seized its image.

Here in this book of studies of her face,
Here, done with lightning brush, it is, most like.

RIQUET (*seizing the book, looks at the sketch*)

Found, found! 'Come ere I die!' I heard that cry
One winter evening by the lake. It came
Across the water, faint upon the wind;
Weary it seemed with distance, low, but clear;
It was her longing that found out my heart.
O'er woods and mountain pass she summons me;
I come, Callista! O the firm fixed earth
And infinite heaven are a burning fire,
And I within the flame am borne by joy,
Whose car outstrips desire. How beautiful
Is all the world! 'Come ere I die!' I come.
Kiss me, my Mother; Father, fare you well.

[*Rushes out.*

KING.

Gone in a whirlwind! I would gladly know
What means this passion.

LANVAL.

Sire, I partly guess,
And the Queen seems to know.

QUEEN.

A year gone by,
Riquet beheld one evening in the woods
The vision of a woman heavenly fair;
And since, in dreams by night, and oft by day,
But oftenest at eve, he has seen her pass
Before him and then vanish. With the dream
He is love-seized, and hopelessness of passion
Has worn him with its frenzy. Now it seems
In Lanval's princess he has found his pearl.—
A frost is at my heart—I fear he is gone.

LANVAL.

Not with my book, I hope; Madam, I trust
That you will take it from him; all my work
During the coming summer lies within it.

KING.

He is not gone, his passion dies in dreams.
I'll gage my swiftest hound we find him now
Revolving like a moon upon the terrace
And dangling from his hand the book.

[*Enter* SERVANT *hastily.*

Speak fool,
What means this haste?

SERVANT.

Your Majesty, the Prince,
Passing me by this instant in the court,
And mounted on his Arab, called me forth.
"Commend me to their Majesties," he said;
"Say if they need me they will find me near
The princess that they wot of. Tell Lanval
His book shall be my treasure till we meet."
With that he gave his horse the spur, and flashed
Over the drawbridge, and before I knew
One half he said, the Prince had made himself
A flying shadow on the mountain road.

KING.

My wager's lost, but I am glad of it;
I did not think the boy had so much fire.

LANVAL.

And I am sorry; I could wish the Prince
Had less of fire; he has burnt up my book.

QUEEN.

O Lanval, find my son. I am alone
When he's not here. Go, seek him at the Court

You left so lately. You will see with joy
Your loved Princess, regain your book, and gain
A mother's gratitude.

KING.

Do better still:
Be our ambassador, and ask the king,
Whose is that forest, if he will receive
Me and the Queen as guests. Take with you gifts
And courteous letters, and send messengers
To bring us answer. Ere the summer die
We shall be with you. Constance, is it well?

QUEEN.

Happily said! Sir Lanval, you will go?

LANVAL.

To-morrow, Madam; for this one short day
Permit me to repose. [*Aside*] I am much bored
With all these freaks of love; I have lost my book;
Go! I must go to find my work again.

KING.

Ill wind it is that blows to no one good;
Riquet is lost, but I shall hunt that wood.

[*Scene closes.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Ilex grove near the PALACE *of* CALLISTA, *on the outskirts of the pine wood. A long alley of ilex trees leads from the forest to the gardens of the palace.*

RIQUET and WOODMAN enter from the forest.

WOODMAN.

THIS, sir, is the place.

RIQUET.

There's for your pains. Farewell,
Watch over my good horse; I have left it safe,
At the tower in the clearing. When I return
You shall not lose by me.

WOODMAN.

Your servant, Sir,
I'll do your bidding carefully.

[*Exit* WOODMAN.

RIQUET.

He is gone—
And I am here alone—glad, very glad.
The pine wood is behind me, and the stream,
That flowing black and slow among the weeds,
And yellow iris, gloomed for awhile my heart.
'Twas a strange day. This forest is a world
Within itself, but I felt less its soul
Than my own thoughts that filled it; in each glade,
Hidden by walls of scented heath, I seemed
To find Callista; all my heart was full
Of her, and musick, so I wrote this song:—

Song.

All the world is sick and cold,
Till I find Callista's eyes;
Life is dead, and youth is old,
Truth and beauty are but lies,
If she love me not—O see,
Through dim ways she comes to me;
Comes to me.

O'er her bosom lie enfurled
Spells that only love can break;

For their breaking waits the world:
O most beautiful, awake.
Wake to love me, come, press fast
Thy sweet lips to mine at last;
Mine at last.

Would God 'twere true. This is the ilex grove
I have seen in dreams—the very, very place,
And this the alley where the woodman said,
Callista walks so often, and alone.
I'll wait, and venture all, my love, my life,
On the bolder chance. The straightest man in the world,
Nay Oberon, his wings instinct with love,
Flying above the tumbling sea by night
To kiss Titania in her Indian cave,
Could not have sped more quickly to his end
Than I since yesternoon. I am all changed;
And I shall win my day. I love the world,
And all that meet me love me for my love.
The women and the children in the village,
Seeing my heart's wild rapture on my face,
Were kindly with me, and the forest folk
Who gather the pine kernels made me rest
Last night around their fire in the glade,
And we were joyous; no one seemed to see,

So much the Spirit of love within me wrought,
How I was made; and as I rode alone,
Nature, my mother, held me to her breast,
And I was glad, immeasurably glad.
The clouds told me their secrets, and the streams
Talked with me as I passed; in every leaf
There was a song, and in all flowers Love
Whispered, and smiled on me.
My heart still sings,
And while I wait, I'll sing.

He sings.

O long ago, when Faery land
Arose new born, King Oberon
Walked pensive on the yellow strand,
And wearied, for he lived alone.

'Why have I none, he said, to love?'—
When soft a wind began to fleet
Across the moonlit sea, and drove
A lonely shallop to his feet.

Of pearl, and rubies red, and gold,
That shell was made, and in it lay

Titania fast asleep, and rolled
In roses, and in flowers of May.

He waked her with a loving kiss,
Her arms around him softly clung;
And none can ever tell the bliss,
These had when Faery-land was young.

That song was made for me. She comes not yet.
How dim the grove is, old and still. This vault
Of leaves is sunproof, but the radiant light
Steals through from leaf to leaf, and makes more rich
The wonder of the darkness blue and warm,
That fills it like a spirit. Underneath,
Among the last year's rustling leaves abide
The gracious children of the cyclamen;
While the black tangle of the arching boughs
Seems woven by enchantment, and makes deeper
Love's sorcery in my heart, and hark, how clear,
Sad Philomel, whose sorrow hates the sun,
Sings in this night of leaves her amorous song,
Too mournful for my heart.

My song I made
When I awoke, in hope and in the morning bathed,
Was better, truer far.

He sings.

Woods are lovely in the Spring,
Roses in the Autumn's dew,
Summer's clouds upon the wing,
Winter, white upon the yew—
But my sweetheart's rosy lips
All this beauty do eclipse.

Every one that sees her face
Sees the heavenly citadel.
How shall I attain her grace,
Who all mortal doth excel?
How shall I my treasure woo?
Birds and woodland, tell me true.

'Love her'—from the lilac bush
Rang the challenge of the starling;
'Faint heart'—whistled loud the thrush,
'Why have you not kissed your darling?
Loving is a simple art;
Clasp her to your beating heart.'

The air grows sweeter,
And a soft whisper runs from tree to tree,

The flowers lift their heads, and the earth breathes like one
Who sleeps with Love.

[*Callista is seen entering the avenue.*

She comes, she comes, my own,
My very vision; white from head to foot,
Beneath the enchanted trees, moving like light
Down the long alley, pure and pale and still,
Her pacing like a deer, her eyes cast down;
Taking no heed of life, deaf to the song
Nature sings round her, to its beauty blind:
A folded rose, a fountain sealed, a world
Waiting the dawn.

And I shall give her life!
I tremble like a willow in the wind:
Is it with joy or fear, or both in one?
Hush, leaping heart, take courage, should you not
Thrill into tenfold life to meet your queen?
I'll stand apart and watch. Lie there, my song;
It may be she will see thee, read and wonder
Who is it that so loves her. Then I will speak.

[*Riquet retires among the trees.*

Enter Callista.

The wood is warm and dark, and all the birds
Are hushed except the nightingale; my heart

Seems like an open grave: in all the world
There is no voice, no hand, to welcome me.
I am weary of my life.
[*Seeing the paper*] What is this thing?
[*Reads*] "To Callista!"
Why, that is I. Who writes to poor Callista?
[*She reads the song.*
'Tis a dull song; it calls me beautiful—
A witless beauty for whom no one cares.

RIQUET (*aside*).

I have, my love, the wit to care for you.

CALLISTA.

I have none left to speak to, could I speak.
My father, sister, maidens, all have left me,
Even that painter. No one loves me, none.
It is a cruel world, and I in it
Most beautiful, but most, O most unhappy! [*Weeps.*

RIQUET (*coming forward*).

Princess, divine Callista, do not weep.
The earth is beautiful for you, and heaven
Smiles when it sees you; all men worship you,
All women love you.

CALLISTA.

Pray, sir, who are you?
More than the jester's freedom marks your words.

RIQUET.

I am Prince Riquet and Callista's slave.
Through one slow year my dreams had shaped you forth,
Not knowing if you breathed to enrich the world;
But yestermorn I saw your heavenly face
In Lanval's book, and when I knew you lived,
Fire seized my heart—and from my father's house,
And o'er the mountain pass, as swift as thought,
And through the woods my passion bore me on,
More tireless than the swallow's southern flight,
Constant as song within the skylark's heart,
And desolate without you as the night
On wastes of mountain snow.
Give me some love;
Love me a little, love me all in all.
Do you not hear the silence of the woods?
They listen for your answer. Answer me.

CALLISTA.

You seem a prince; your voice and manner speak
Of gentle birth, but you are much unlike

The princes that I know. A prince should be
As handsome as the day: I cannot love
A man whom nature has made so awry.

RIQUET.

Could you but love me, we might find a cure
For Nature's fault; and beauty is not all
Love needs to kindle or to keep its fire.

CALLISTA.

O that is true; for I am fair, and yet
I win no love, I am too dull to live;
I think, but all my thoughts escape my will;
Sorrow and joy I only seem to touch
Ere they are gone; and when I strive to speak,
The words die on my lips: I'd gladly be
Like my dark sister, even like to you,
Could I be wise. My beauty is base dross;
I scorn it, hate it, and would yield it all
To have one grain of master-making wit.

RIQUET.

O blame not beauty, it makes glad the world.
Kings, warriors, statesmen, artists, patriots,

The peasant of the waste, mechanic churls,
Nature and all her haunting spirits, all heav'n,
All faeryland, and even the great Gods,
Have loved and worshipped it: there is no power
Its star does not command; its empire is
By right divine, its worship duty. You
Have beauty, and by it you rule the world.

CALLISTA.

I have no empire. Of my little world
Wit is the master, for my sister rules
My father, all the courtiers, and myself;
Nay, even the princes turn from me to her
To hear her wisdom; were she not to me
Kindness itself, I'd hate her heart for that.

RIQUET.

All princes are not fools. I, who have wit,
Find myself threefold wise in loving you.

CALLISTA.

Can you love dulness? That is strange, for I
Could not love you, although your eyes are deep,
And like my sister's, quick with light.

RIQUET.

If wit
Were mine to give you, what would you give to me?

CALLISTA.

Give! All I have to give.

RIQUET.

Yourself?

CALLISTA.

Myself!

RIQUET.

Yes; would you marry me?

CALLISTA.

Not for the world.

RIQUET.

Think not so quickly: by a fairy grace
I can give wit and wisdom where I love,
And I love you. Give me your hand, and I
Shall be the lord of joy; and you, Wit's queen,
Shall have the kingdom that a woman loves—

The worship of mankind, life gay and full
And changeful as an ocean, and a heart
So tuned to beauty that your joy in life,
Filling your being, shall make all men love you.

CALLISTA.

I should be happy then.

RIQUET.

Be happy then.
Take but a tithe of all that I can give;
[*He waves his hand.*
Do you not feel the birth of thought—the first
Faint dawn of life and power and change and love?

CALLISTA.

Strange, strange—the silent fountains of my heart
Move in their slumber, and the gates of my brain
Begin unfold their leaves. O Sir, fulfil
This gladness, make me know my life, give me
Myself.

RIQUET.

[*Aside*] O Galatea! [*Aloud*] I'll give you all.—
New life a thousand fold more beautiful
Sleeps in your heart; speak but a little word,

And it will waken like the earth at morning.
Love, flowing through my will into your being,
Has wrought this wonder, and your soul has passed
From death to dreams; but there's no tongue can tell
What joy, what power, what glory shall be yours
When I have bid Imagination like
A god who goes to make afresh a world
Enter your heart, winged and alit with life,
Armed with transfiguring powers. He waits your promise,
Waits at the gates of being.
Say—I am yours;
And this pale dawn shall brighten into day.

CALLISTA.

Had I but wit I should love life; I fear
The love of life would like you less, not more.

RIQUET.

No, Princess, then you might be wise enough
To love my heart. Try, use my gift for a year;
Then be my wife.

CALLISTA.

I will not have your gift.

[*Horns heard, and the hunt is seen passing in the distance.*

RIQUET.

Look to the hunt;
See how the courtiers crowd around your sister
To hear her pleasant speech. Think how their praise
Would bend round you when wit and beauty joined
Had made you queen. Thought cannot paint the power
Your lightest word would have.

CALLISTA (who has followed the hunt with longing eyes, turning impetuously to RIQUET).

I will take it.
I will marry you.

RIQUET.

Give me your hand, Princess.
Thought, wit and wisdom, feeling, fancy, all
Imagination's world, I give to you.
[*Aside*] Her eyes light up already, and her mouth
Trembles with coming thought. O how the blood
Flies to and fro upon her cheek and tells
The change and dawn of her heart—She opens like
A rose in the sun.

CALLISTA.

Oh—what is this? The clouds
Lift off my mind as I have seen the mists

Rise in warm autumn noons and leave the pines:
And rushing like streams new swollen with mountain rains,
Thoughts, fancies, dreams, and joys, and love, and hope,
The knowledge and the passions of the world,
And the glow and power and life of womanhood,
Pour in full flood into my empty soul;
And to my lips words come as thick as elves
Dancing in utter joy upon the meadows
When summer moonlight shines. O wonderful!
Prince Riquet, I am grateful.

RIQUET.

Callista—
Gladness is mine since you are glad.

CALLISTA.

How rich
In beauty is the world! This wood wherein
I wandered without sense and soul is full
Of voices sweeter than Titania's eyes;
The breath of the soft leaves and flowers is like
A child's kiss on my lips; a river of youth
Streams through my heart. The very air is love.
I have awakened from an ugly dream
Into a world of joy!

RIQUET.

[*Aside*] She marks me not;
Not even sees me. In her new-born life,
That like a fountain springs to meet the sun,
I do not live; already all's forgotten.
[*Aloud*] Of all the love you give the world, give me
A little ere I go.

CALLISTA.

I will recall
With pleasure that I met you, when you go.

RIQUET.

Not memory nor gratitude I ask,
But love, from you.

CALLISTA.

It must not be, Prince Riquet.
Your very gift has made your suit in vain;
And were it not that I am far too glad
To be so changed, I should regret your fate.
It is so strange and sad by giving love
To kill your chance of love—

RIQUET.

I have your promise,
Here in my heart.

CALLISTA.

Yes, yes; I promised when
I knew not what life was: a change of being
Dissolves the promises that other life
Made for itself; and now, new-born, I throw
All the old dream and all it said away.
With kindness I will meet you, but with love
Not while I live. You cannot force a pledge,
Made in a moment of despair and pain,
Into a lifelong burden. Be chivalrous,
And set me free.

RIQUET.

Kindness from you I hate,
Freedom for you is death to me: I love,
And love seeks life, not death.

CALLISTA.

Nay, worse than death
To live with me and love me while I felt
No love, but anger deepening to distaste.

Give me my promise back, and I will be
Your friend for ever.

RIQUET.

Then give back my soul.
Through me you think, and feel, and see the world,
Through me receive all beauty, know all truth,
Through me you live and love, and you will charm
All men through me. I have created you,
And yet you leave me.

CALLISTA.

Do you repent your gift?
If not, you claim too much. A woman takes,
But in her taking she does so much honour,
A man should ask no more: if he need more,
He makes a second gift, and all his gifts
Ask no reward but only leave to love.

RIQUET.

The wit I gave you, Princess, you have used
Against the giver; perhaps the second gift
Your careless avarice needs is that of love.

CALLISTA.

I know not love; I do not wish to love.
I wish to rule, to use my new-found powers,
To play with life and men, to wander free
And drink enjoyment, to find changing food
In every moment for my new desires,
And rapture in my life. There is no end
To all I wish, and hope, and long for—none.
I have no room for love; it seems a dream.
Be pitiful, Prince Riquet, set me free.
Or if you will not, I will free myself.
I am a child, and not a woman now,
Only just born, a child within a woman,
A woman who sees all things like a child,
Who longs to play in the sunshine and not think,
Who wishes to be liked, but not to love,
Who cannot love as you desire love,
But who resents a chain: undo the chain.

RIQUET.

To bind a woman is to make her cruel,
And—you have pleaded well; yet you are mine;
I will not loose the bond.

CALLISTA.

O far less kind
Than suits with gentle birth! Are you a prince,
And claim as right what you should woo as grace?
Then, Prince, farewell. You might have set me free,
And then I might have loved you—but not now.
[*Half aside*] O joyful days to come! I think of love!
I who have power, and every power untried!
I'll prove them all. My world is at my feet,
Like a new land that from the mountain's edge
Bursts on the traveller's eye. Before I rest,
I'll conquer it to its remotest bound,
And be its queen. What will these wooers say,
And what my sister? I can stay no longer.
[*Aloud*] Good-bye, Prince Riquet, do not look so sad;
There is no sadness in the world at all.

[*Exit* CALLISTA.

RIQUET (*alone*).

What a wild wonder is a woman's will!
Impulse commands it, hope, and faith, and love;
But conscience never, truth and justice never.
Who could enchain it, could bind fast the sun,
And whirling earth, and make the flying wind

A prisoner, and lay a sudden hand
Upon the lightning's arrow.
She is gone;—
Heartless, ungrateful, false—and I am left,
Love's wandering exile, beaten with chill sorrows,
Alone, the dwelling of despair; and yet
Hope, over all, a dove against the storm,
Unwearied seeks its home; she shall be mine.
For the next year she lives and breathes by me,
Her very soul is mine.
She said—Farewell,
Farewell for ever. No—for ever mine.

Scene closes.

SCENE II.

A Circular Glade in the PINE WOOD. *It is late evening of the same day.*

Enter RIQUET.

I AM vext at heart and weary to the death.
For wandering midst the thoughts of ruined love,
Among the mazes of this sorrowful wood,
Where I am so forgotten, I have lost
The path I did not care to find.
Slow climbs,
White as a ghost, o'er cloudy stairs, the moon,
Drowning the stars in light; as slowly climbs
Sorrow's cold moon within my heart, and pours
Pain on my life. If thought would set me free,
Here would I rest, for now the shepherd's lamp
Has sunk below the west; and the heavy night
Droops her dusk eyelids o'er this drowsy glade.
The meadow is at peace; and circling round,
The dark-browed pines watch o'er its secret, and
Pity and welcome me; and soft the grass,
Where, in the midst, and like a beating heart,

The rejoicing fountain urges up its wave,
And flows, a stream of music, through the fern
Singing itself to sleep. Would I could hear
My mother's voice! Passion of sorrow makes
A man a child. What use! my grievous wound
None but the giver of the wound can cure.
Sleep, visit me, hush the wild storm within,
Give me some hope in dreams.

O, broken truth!
Lost love, and life made ruin like a path
Breached by the mountain floods!
(*Takes out her picture.*) This is her image—
I cannot see a lie in this sweet face;
And yet she smiled and lied and went away.
False, O Callista, false!

Enter GENTILLA *behind, who touches him with her wand.*

Sleep, my child, sleep.

[*RIQUET sinks on the grass near the fountain, and the fairy bends over him.*

His face is worn with pain, and yet his grief
And passion have so wrought it that it wins
Some of his mother's beauty. She was young
When first I loved her; the quick-footed wind,
That leads the choir of many-coloured clouds

To dance their morrice in the fields of heaven,
Was not more joyful. Oft in summer nights
We roved the woods, waking the flowers from sleep,
Then sat beside the moonlight streamlet, where
I told her tales of Faery while the dark
Thrilled with the nightingale.

RIQUET (*dreaming*).

Callista, speak,
Give me your hand.

GENTILLA.

Rest, rest, unquiet heart.
Forget her for a time. Your mother loved,
Like you, too well, and when the knight who won
Her passionate youth, died, smitten by the boar,
Her childhood died, and after bitter days
She found dim comfort in the warlike love
The King laid at her feet. I loved her still,
Though she had mortal sorrow; and her son,
Sleeping so sadly here, is dear to me.

RIQUET (*crying out in his dream*).

Gone, gone! Undo this dreadful silence: who
Waits in the chamber? Bring me lights.

GENTILLA.

O hush,
Poor, foolish boy; take from my spell deep sleep,
And learn within its softly spinning sphere
That when another year dissolves the curse
Cast round your birth, and sweet Callista speaks
The word that makes you beautiful as Spring,
When in the woods he wakens like a fire,
She will so love you that a single hour
Of that immeasurable life of passion
Will drown your past in joy.
How like a child,
Tired of sorrow, at last he dreamless sleeps.
It is a healthy slumber; with earth's soft pulse
The sleeper's pulse is going, and the woods
Whisper around him peace. The hour has come
To comfort him and take him to my world
Of faery stillness, where his heart shall be
The palace of expectant joy; and day by day
Sweet dreams, like wild-eyed dawns, shall make his hope
For ever young—dreams such as now I bring
To sing his grief to slumber. I will call
My soft-winged creatures of the elements,
Who live within my life. Come, come, my elves,

Where in cool shade and water you delay,
Flying the sunlight; come, the moon is high,
And in this glade my favourite weary lies.—
I hear the wind their fanning plumes awaken:
The dark wood seems on fire.—

O welcome, elves.

Enter three bands of FAIRIES.

FIRST BAND.

Mistress, from the moors and mountains
At thy bidding we are here.

SECOND BAND.

We have heard thee from the fountains
And the streams, and reedy mere.

THIRD BAND.

Woodland dwellers, we have fled
From our soft and honied bed.

ALL.

Swiftly speak, thy pleasure tell;
Ere the nightingale repeat

In the dell her sorrow sweet,
We will do it, quick and well.

GENTILLA.

See where Prince Riquet lies, sleeping for grief.
Of old you loved him: cheer him with your dance,
Weave through his brain a web of peace and joy,
Tell him his fate in music, soothe his heart.

The FAIRIES *dance round* RIQUET, *singing.*

Prince, the months will quickly flow
Through their zones of gloom and glow;
You are young, and well may bear
Love's sweet longing for a year.
In the summer you shall lie,
Hidden from all mortal eye,
In our elfin castle where
Sorrow never is, or care;
All the autumn you shall dwell
In Titania's Orient dell,
Nourishing your love apart;
Winter shall not touch your heart
With sharp cold, for you shall be
With the Princes of the sea

In warm islands; and in spring
When with love the world doth ring,
We will bring you to this glade,
Where of old the fairies made
Underground, a palace gay.
Then upon the fated day
We will draw Callista here;
She shall list with pretty fear
'Neath the earth the marriage noise—
Blowing horns and marching boys,
Maidens chatting while arraying,
Servants running, tables laying,
Dishes clinking, wine outpouring,
Calling cooks, and fires roaring.
She will ask, 'Why, what is this?'
And the little folk shall say,
''Tis Prince Riquet's marriage day
And Callista is his bliss.'
Then appear and you shall gain
All you hoped for long in vain.

GENTILLA.

O sweetly sung! Away, and meet me where
The ancient oak-wood stays the hastening stream,

And reddens round the moonlit glade where now
Titania leads the dance. [*They vanish.*
Awaken! Prince,
Follow me quickly, wake to hope and love.
[*Exit* GENTILLA.

RIQUET (*awaking*).

Stay heavenly vision, speak, and tell me more.
Where am I—It is night—yet they were here:
And they have sung sweet hope into my heart
To courage patience. I will abide this year,
For now my heart is warm, the breast of night
Glows with my love, and driving fast through heaven,
Girt by the Spirits of the rising wind—
Callista is the goddess who conducts
The full-orbed chariot of the cloud-flecked moon
Through stars that chant her beauty.

LANVAL (*shouting in the wood*).

Hillo—Ho!

RIQUET.

What voice breaks on the silence of my love,
And shocks the night?

LANVAL (*entering the glade*).

At last! an open space—
How glad I am to scape the gloomy wood!
Could I but find some wandering peasant here,
I might sleep sound to-night, and lo, my wish
Answered at once, for near the fountain's edge
A man lies sleeping.

RIQUET (*rising*).

Lanval, as I live—
Welcome! A friend's face is a rose in May.

LANVAL.

Is't you, my Prince, strayed like myself, alone?
At this cold hour the rose is closed, and I
Am shrunk with the spring-frost, but why I find
Prince Riquet here, who underneath the moon
Courts chilly sleep, makes me as lost in wonder
As I have been within this pathless wood—
Where is the palace, for I die for sleep?

RIQUET.

I cannot tell. I too have lost my way—
It may be, lost my love.

LANVAL.

Have you not seen
Callista in the grove of which I told you?

RIQUET.

Yes, I have seen her, and have loved her more
Than frost-bound prudence willed. I gave her all,
In reckless trust that she would give me love.

LANVAL.

What did she say?

RIQUET.

She laughed, and fled away,
To use my gift, she said, and left me sorrow.

LANVAL.

'Tis pitiful. It was not wise, my Prince,
To give away a world you could not hold
When it was given. 'Twas folly to give all.

RIQUET.

Where have you been, and thinking what dull thoughts,
To talk the doleful jargon of the world

Of wisdom and of folly? Wisdom is
In giving all; the love that cannot give
All, foolishly, is folly.

LANVAL.

I am glad
You had a heart so great; but I am grieved,
Vext like a child that she has won her soul;
For it will trouble all her beauty, as
A well, outbreaking underneath, disturbs
The sleeping summer of a lonely lake,
That imaged all its shores and woods, and made
Their images more soft and fair, but now
Rippled by inward life reflects no more.
She had the rest of Sculpture,—yet she moved.
Joy and surprise it was to watch her changes;
For every change seemed a new statue wrought
By a great artist in his greatest hour.

RIQUET.

You did not think this treason on the day
Of which you told me, when love touched her, and
She rose in ecstacy. O see, your eyes
Flash to remember it. Not death, but life

Makes Beauty; new life makes beauty greater—
As loveliness unloved is like the rose
Without the dew and sunshine.

LANVAL.

Does she love?
I thought she ran away from love.

RIQUET.

Alas!
She loves not, but she shall.

LANVAL.

What is she now?

RIQUET.

She has gained wit but with it a hard heart.

LANVAL.

Whether her heart be hard as Atlas' top,
Or softer than the honey which Hymettus
Gives to his bees, I do not care; within
Her matchless beauty I entrance myself;
You in your love. Her beauty, is that changed?

RIQUET.

She is fair, yet not so fair, changed the wrong way.
Life ripples through her like a stream in the sun,
As sparkling and as cold; within her eyes
A restless Fancy moves; her scornful lips
Redden with epigram, not love; no touch
Of passion gives her wings to reach
That world where life is lost, and found, and crowned.

LANVAL.

O fatal gift!

RIQUET.

No, not to you! You'll find
New matter in her. Go, paint her in unrest.
She is so changed, she will disturb in you
Part of your nature that now sleeps, and set
Its powers into war with peaceful art;
But she will force you out of painting thoughts
To paint quick things; so you will gain by loss;
And when her heart awakes, you will rejoice.

LANVAL.

I do not understand.

RIQUET.

There is no need.
All that you seem to lose will come again
When once she loves. It is the charm of love
That its last, wildest rapture in the heart,
Contented, lapses to the quiet of joy,
And then from that, to uttermost repose
In which desire sleeps.

LANVAL.

You are wiser, Prince,
Than I have thought you.

RIQUET.

It is no wonder;
Ere this I only loved, now I have seen
The woman that I love.

LANVAL.

But I love none,
And I am starved and cold; and love may be
To others meat and fire; for me, I want
Not woman's smiles, but food and heat and sleep:
And could you tell me, Prince, where I might find them

I would make bold to leave you with the moon :—
They say she once had sympathy with love.

RIQUET.

Go straight before you where Orion shines
Over the pines. It may be you will find
Callista's place of rest. Guard her from ill :
Bid her remember : I will keep my pledge—
Twelve months shall make her mine—Meantime I go,
Borne in the viewless chariot of the dawn,
Far to the Western Isles. Speak to my mother ;
Tell her the sorrow of our parting hour
Shall be o'erwhelmed in joy, that I am glad,
Nay more, in hope triumphant, and that safe
Lodged with Gentilla for a quiet year,
I shall remember her with constant love.

[*Exit* RIQUET.

LANVAL.

He is much changed. I would that I could love ;
It shifts the poles of life ; but with it storm
Blows high, and work needs peace. A double love
Divides the house of life until it fall ;
I'll care for art alone—

O I forget,

My book, the goal and beacon of my haste,
Is with the Prince— [*Running and shouting.*
Prince Riquet, ho! In vain—
The forest drowns my voice, the rushing wind
Has borne him on its wings away, and I
Find nothing but the grass whereon he lay
Couched like a hare. Sweet was the place he chose,
Close by the lucent stream that running sings
Its lyric to the moon. Her light falls soft
Upon the embroidered fern and tangled flowers,
And shines among the mossy stones that fret
The wandering brook. What is't that glimmers there
Where the Prince slept? It seems a silver star
Fallen from the horn of the moon. Is't possible?—
It is indeed, my very, very book,
And its illumined clasp that smiles to find me
Lost in this wood. Be welcome to my hand,
Dear truant, strayed and found.
(*He takes up the book.*)
'Tis strange he left it
If he loved. Yet, he who has seen his love
With passionate eyes needs not her image then,
So fine an artist is Love's memory—
Thus runs their talk.
The night grows cold, the trees

Shiver and darken, and the dawn is nigh.
The Western Isles! so said the Prince; it is
A weary journey. I am bone-tired and starved;
The Western Isles I seek are food and sleep.
There gleams Orion and there lies my way.

[*Exit* LANVAL.

The scene closes.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

PALACE of CALLISTA. The GARDEN.

A year has passed by since the last scene.

Enter TWO LADIES of the COURT.

FIRST LADY.

WHERE do you come from?

SECOND LADY.

From the studio.

FIRST LADY.

And I too: I did not see you, but then I sat behind a screen and laughed till I was weary.

SECOND LADY.

No wonder, so did I. I should not like to be a Prince. . . .

FIRST LADY.

Nor I; when Callista is by. Did you ever hear the like? She plays with her suitors as a juggler with oranges. No sooner does one of them think that he rests in her hand than he flies into the air. He gone, she takes the other and flings him up. To and fro they fly, now visiting hope in her hand, then touching despair in the air, but only at home in the dull amazement of mid passage. They cannot die for love, they have no time to die. It is pleasant to see men so terribly befooled.

SECOND LADY.

I like her for it. Had she favoured one and flouted the rest, I shouldn't have liked it so well. But she cared for none, and spared none, and they deserved their buffeting. She has wreaked the wrongs of all our sex, and for that I love her. And then who can be jealous of her? At least not I. What of you?

FIRST LADY.

Not I. She is too beautiful to compare with. They say no fairy is jealous of Titania. And most of the Princes were clothed with folly, and shod with dulness, and capped with vanity. Who cared whether they cared or not for Callista! There was Prince Florizel who was in love with his figure, and Prince Candy who worshipped his own sentiment, and Prince Verduret who talked

of his dogs, and the two brothers that played the wind and the rain in love and blustered and wept by turns, and Prince Almanzor whom fate and his father made a fool, and a hundred others. They came as thick as bears to a honey nest, but they went away empty and stung. Only two are left now, and they are stupid.

SECOND LADY.

But some were brave young men, and worth a woman's eye. I found one, and so did you.

FIRST LADY.

Oh yes! that they were. It is Callista's doing that we are all married. She drove them by her coldness and mockery to find comfort in us; and so mauled and wounded did they come that they were ready to take our scoffing for tenderness and our coldness for love. We had choice enough. She has been a blessing to the Court, for her scorn has made more marriages in a year than love in ten, and a blessing to wives, for all our husbands are tame.

SECOND LADY.

Even Graciosa, her sister, was wed: how strange that was.

FIRST LADY.

I was away then, tell me about it.

SECOND LADY.

You know she married Prince Charming, the most beautiful Prince in the world. It was her wit and her sweet way of thinking that enthralled him. His brain went like a snail's, hers flew like the eagle. If he thought of a matter he lost his way in it, and then she found it for him, and this amazed him into adoration. He didn't care for Callista, nor she for him; they were both so beautiful that they put one another out. But she stung him till he was unhappy, and then he wished to be loved and comforted.

FIRST LADY.

In short, plainness and kindness were better than beauty and scorn. And perhaps, he had enough of beauty in himself, and ugliness had its charm for him—when it was fine-spirited. Had Narcissus met an ugly woman who could talk like Graciosa he would not have died of self-love.

SECOND LADY.

Just so; and he wooed Graciosa, and she loved him for his beauty, and then for his humility, and then for his worship; for his love began in reverence and ended in passion. Dull as the man was, he had the wit to love. I never saw any one look happier on his wedding day. "Dear, you shall rule the

kingdom," I heard him say as they stood in the deep window where the jasmine climbs the wall. "Nay," she answered, "let me rule you, and then I shall rule the kingdom, and I rule by loving. My kingdom is here," and she laid her head on his breast. She looked pretty then—I could not get away nor yet help seeing them—so I watched them through the leaves.

FIRST LADY.

What did he say?

SECOND LADY.

Nothing, but he put his hand on her hair—you remember it—soft, dark as a thunder-cloud, her one beauty—and he kissed her, and then drew up his head proudly, not of himself but of her, and his infinite love made him both wise and bright. When a man has the wit to be proud of a woman, he is no longer witless.

FIRST LADY.

But Callista; how did she like it, was she jealous?

SECOND LADY.

Not a bit! She was delighted. She liked Prince Charming when he no longer wanted to marry her, and she always loved her sister. It was pretty to see her bid them good-bye. "Farewell darling," she said to Graciosa, "you are not as beautiful as I am, but you are ten times more charming. What will you be

now you are married to Charming?"—and she gave her hand over her sister's shoulder to the Prince. And then Graciosa whispered to her, and Callista told me what she said when we talked next day in the pleached alley—"I was ugly, but he and I loved, and now he thinks me beautiful, and I know he is wise. You are beautiful, and when you love you will be wise." "Am I not wise now?" said Callista. "No, dear, only witty and clever, not wise. Wisdom is love's gift." "Then I won't be wise for a while," Callista answered—and if not loving be not being wise, she has kept her word—there is not a touch, not one sign of love about her.

FIRST LADY.

No, and so much the better. The Court is as gay as a wood in spring when all the birds and beasts are making holiday. What dances, and hunts, and parties in the forest! What masques and mummings at night! What feasts for this and for that! But I begin to be tired. See! the huntsmen and the dogs are coming through the gate. That horn was cheerily blown. It is King Riquet's note, let us go and see them off; they will start in half an hour.

SECOND LADY.

No, stay here quietly. I am weary of that King. It is nearly a year since he came to fill the Court with noise, and

he won't go while there's a stag in the chase or a heron in the pools. And his wife, she wearies me also.

FIRST LADY.

Too much sentiment; living in flowers and music and the past, and always in mourning. Why did they marry, why come together at all? They are matched like two dissonant bells in a tower. Were I married so, I would unmarry. I believe the only thing they ever agreed on was in coming here, and I don't know why they came.

SECOND LADY.

No one knows but Lanval, now that our King is dead. It is whispered that their son, Prince Riquet, is deformed, and was in love with Callista.

FIRST LADY.

Lanval let fall one day, in a reckless humour, that Callista owed her wit to the Prince, on a promise she would marry him.

SECOND LADY.

No, no, she met a fairy in the ilex grove who pitied her and changed her.

FIRST LADY.

I heard it was a man, a misshapen man. You remember the day she went out as silent and dull as she had been since a child?

SECOND LADY.

Yes, this day last year. One is not likely to forget it. She went out like a diamond set in lead; her beauty made her dulness seem more dull. She came back, a living diamond, scattering diamonds at every word and look and smile. Her father, the whole Court were struck dumb. No wonder; she talked like a loosened river.

FIRST LADY.

Well, that very day, Prince Charming, hunting in the forest, met a wild-eyed dwarf who would give him no answer when he asked which way the stag had gone. I know Prince Riquet is a dwarf, and there are some who say the fairies love him, and that he has strange wit, and a strange power of giving it.

SECOND LADY.

Did Callista ever speak of it?

FIRST LADY.

Never. She is silent as death about that day. When King Riquet spoke once of his son—she said—"Who is he?" When her father asked her where she got her wit—"She found it," she answered, "in the ilex grove." When I questioned her about it—she answered—"Be glad I have it, as I am, and ask no questions." Anyway she has forgotten all about its beginning; her wit is second nature now. Even when her father died, nine months ago, she did not mourn for long. Her joyous life could not contain itself in the prison of grief. Her sorrow was true, but it was short; she wept bitterly, but she dried her tears as eagerly. I long to get to the bottom of the secret; I wish Lanval would tell me;—Listen, I hear his voice.

LANVAL, singing outside the scene.

When a woman is most curst,
Then the world is at its worst.

FIRST LADY.

That is pleasant news! he does not seem happy. Here he comes, looking as black as night. I'd ask him my question if I dared, but he is so changed of late I scarcely know him. How gay he was, but now—

[*Enter* LANVAL.

SECOND LADY.

Good day, Sir Lanval.

LANVAL.

Good! It is drear and dull,
A hateful world.

SECOND LADY.

Drear! dull! The sun is bright,
The world is tuned to love, not hate, the sky
Sleeps in the quiet of sweet air, the starlings
Chat in the lilacs, and the martins dip
Their dusk wings in the pond in utter joy:
There's not a living thing which does not try
To make the beauty of the day more beautiful.
Look at the insects, how they flash in colour
From shade to radiance; harken the birds
How even in warm noon they sing; and see,
How proudly, like a ruffling ship of snow,
The swan sails through the sunlight. High and gay
Leaps the bright fountain, trees and flowers and grass
Give and receive delight—What is this humour?
Why so out of tune?

LANVAL.

At dawn I thought with you.
The choir of birds awakened me; I saw
Phœbus rise ardent and his sea-washed steeds
Rush upwards, snorting gold, and then my heart
Glowed in me like the god; but now my mood
Is soured and changed; I hate the day; the sky
Is dead, and the sun hard, the busy birds
Trouble the humming air, and trees and flowers
Are too self-pleased. Their temper is not mine.

FIRST LADY.

O, fortunately! Else Dame Nature were
In evil case. I think you have wrought to-day
At your great picture of the Princess?

LANVAL (*angrily*).

No!
She came this morning, but she brought her troop;
They talked like sparrows in the village street
Over a heap of straw, and she talked with them
As if she liked their chirping, flashing forth
Into a hail of epigrams, and laughed,
Until I hated her and them. My pencil

Dropped—so did my spirits; Then she said
'Not in the vein, Sir Lanval! Can it be
That Art is as capricious as myself?
I thought the only mistress that you loved
Was always faithful. Shall I sit no longer?'
Madam, I said, you have not sat at all.

FIRST LADY.

Oh! That was roughly said, but you are freed
From courtesy by genius.

LANVAL.

I was once
All courtesy, but I am wrenched awry
By fools, and by caprice.

FIRST LADY.

That's very clear.
I would not have your temper.

LANVAL.

Had you heard
The universal silence when I said

Those angry words, and then the chattering noise
Of those bedizened monkeys, snarling blame,
You would have scorned their miserable lives.
What madness brought me here? A close sick air;
It stifles me. What artist breathes in courts?
I hate them all.

SECOND LADY.

We too were there, we heard
Callista mock the world, but tired with laughter
Left ere the sitting closed, and did not hear
This pleasant thing. What said the Princess, she
Knows you and loves you.

LANVAL.

Aye, she understood,
And glancing at those popinjays and me,
And softly smiling to herself, well pleased
To stir their folly and my humour, said
'To lose your temper is to lose your art,
You cannot paint to-day'—and then she stooped,
Picked up my pencil in her gracious way,
Nodded good-bye and cried—'Come, we will go
And seek the sunshine on the garden lawns.

I cannot rest'—and then I heard her murmur
Low to herself—'I lose, then find again
My will, myself, without a cause. Some joy
Hangs in the future like an unseen star,
And troubles me with gladness. In my heart
Floats a dim promise.' Then she left me there
Twirling my pencil.

SECOND LADY.

That was strangely said:
What did she mean? It is not like herself
To live in expectation or desire;
The present is her world.

LANVAL.

I do not care.
I only know that she disturbs my life,
Flashes around me like a summer storm
Of mingled sunshine hail and lightning, and
Makes mad my day with freaks. She will not sit
Through a whole morning, but breaks off in the midst
When I am happiest, when my brush and heart
Work most together; and she will not wear

Twice the same dress, but dresses with her moods
And these change like the outline of a cloud
In a fitful wind. On sunny days no prayer
Can keep her patient. 'It is too fair,' she cries,
'Too sweet in the woods, to linger here
A slave to art.' On shadowy days it is
Too gloomy in the studio, and she rides
With the rough King whose blustering admiration
Amuses her: on stormy days she sighs
To hear the ocean thunder of the storm
Roll, roaring like a wave, athwart the pines.
She always finds excuse. Sometimes my cap
Displeasures her fine taste, sometimes my blouse
Does not become me, and the other day
My noisy footfall jarred the dreamy peace
She said she needed. When, indignant, I
Showed her my slippers, shod with silence, brought
From silken Samarcand—found out, she laughed,
And said 'it was no matter: she was weary
And everything was wrong.' The glinting light
On dancing water varies not so fast;
And every ray she flings, is barbed, and stings:
She loves to worry men. Riquet once said,
That love would quiet her; I would she loved.
But most I wish—O would to Heaven she were

Dull, changeless, ignorant and mute again,
Then she was perfect. Hark, I hear her laugh
Ring through the garden, and the hateful sound
Darkens the sun in the sky. I cannot stay,
I will hide in the wood.

[*Exit* LANVAL

FIRST LADY.

Did you hear that phrase
Which in his passion he let slip about
Callista and Prince Riquet? It falls in
With my conjecture.

But see, Callista comes,
Followed by all her maids and those two fools,
The mincing Princes, and with her the old King
Bowing and smiling, while she walks as if
The world were hers; and yet her pride is made
Virtue by loveliness. How beautiful,
How flashing fair she is; her face is Light,
The very Life of Nature thrills her body;
The sunbeams break about her and the doves
Fly round her head. Mark how she chafes the King.

Enter KING RIQUET, CALLISTA, *and* PRINCES.

CALLISTA.

Your Majesty says well—To hunt the stag
Is wiser than to hunt a woman: she,
When she stands at bay, wounds, slays, and conquers;
But the poor stag is slain. That, gracious Sire,
You have not said.

KING RIQUET.

Whene'er in youth I ran
After a maiden, then I overtook her,
Before she stood at bay.

CALLISTA.

Then she wished it—
It was her will, not you, that overtook her.

KING RIQUET.

Fair Princess, had you lived when I was young,
And swifter than a forest fire, I would
Have overtaken you.

CALLISTA.

Many have tried it;
Princes in shoals, and you were once a Prince.
Perhaps you were overwhelming—and at least
The boar, and stag and heron know your prowess.—
I hear the huntsman's horn, the noon-day sport
Waits for your presence, and I wish you—well—
More fortunate in slaughter than I think
You were in love.

KING RIQUET.

Too sharply said, Princess.
Could I but dip my spear point in your wit,
Its touch were death. Till then, I'll take with me
The memory of your bright eyes to the wood
To hunt my quarry by. [*Exit* KING.

FIRST PRINCE.

Not in the woods,
Shine your deep eyes, Callista, but in heaven
Like autumn stars.

CALLISTA.

The stars are of the night,

And I am of the day; decay creeps on
When autumn comes, and I am rich as Spring
With youth and life;—your compliment is cold.

FIRST PRINCE.

My heart is not.

CALLISTA.

Had you a heart, your wit
Would make new words—these are the worn-out coin
Of facile love, soiled by a thousand wooers;
The village hind should be ashamed to use them,
Much more a Prince.

SECOND PRINCE.

He should have said you were
The silver shining moon, whose presence makes
Gladness among the clouds, and we the clouds
That worship you.

CALLISTA.

The moon is too like me,
And never knows her mind; nor do I love

Clouds near my path, though every cloud were drest
In a Prince's livery. Were I the moon,
I would not shine on you.

SECOND PRINCE.

Then be my sun.

CALLISTA.

Then I should wither you, a flower too frail
To bear fierce light.
[*Aside.*] Yet could I care for them,
I would be star, moon, sun—O were I to love,
I'd be my lover's watchful lamp, and find
In that a sweet content.

SECOND LADY.

Do you mark that?
'Tis a strange touch of softness in her ways,
Unknown before.
Princess, you speak like love
When it begins to move—

CALLISTA.

As if I were
One with the spirit that shakes the woods before
Young Spring comes rushing with his winds to wake
Flowers, streams, and fields to weave the dance of life.

SECOND PRINCE.

Then turn on me the tender light that grows
To beauty in your eyes.

FIRST PRINCE.

No, make it mine;
I am the eldest suitor to your hand.

CALLISTA.

Alas, whene'er I look upon a Prince
It seems to vanish. Royalty, I think,
Kills love. Could you be counsellors, grave men
Weighted with politic care; or soldiers scarred
With the sharp claws of war who had led hosts
To the roaring breach; or had you wrought with art
Poems or pictures such as Lanval makes,
Whom your dull pride despises, then I might

Have felt some motions of dim love for you.
But you are only Princes, neat and courtly,
Drest like the sunset cloud, and your fine tongues
Filed to thin compliment, Princes only—
And I have seen so many—Pardon me,
I cannot talk to-day. Where is Lanval?
He might amuse me.

SECOND LADY.

Madam, he flung away
When he heard you coming—To the wood—he said—
But he is in the pleasaunce, by the pool,
Feeding the carp. They do not talk, he says,
And in the clear green element they move
Like thoughts within his brain. His morning's work
Had ruffled him: I never saw worse temper.

CALLISTA.

No wonder! I am like a rose to-day
The south wind baffles, beaten to and fro
From recklessness to languor; failing with
Desires that flit like dreams, dim tender thoughts
That master me—until I beat them back,
Angry within. I do not know myself.

Bring me the sunbright wool my father found
Among the tents in Araby; spread it
Beneath the o'ershadowing lime-tree where I made
The fountain cleave the grass, and there at last
I may find rest; a weary heart loves well
Nature's wild water song.
Soft, who comes hither?
The mournful Queen, who seems would speak with me.
Withdraw, I pray you.

Enter QUEEN RIQUET. CALLISTA *speaks.*

Madam, I am glad
The sun and sweet air have prevailed on you.—
Is not the garden fair? The King pursues
The chase he loves, I heard the deep mouthed dogs
Not half an hour ago startle the woods;
But, ere he went, he stayed to interchange
A warlike compliment or two with me.

QUEEN RIQUET.

The evening is far dearer to my mood
Than this white noon; but morning marries best
With your life-giving beauty. From my window
I saw you like a comet with your train
Of shining vapours.

CALLISTA.

True; and fitly said!
Vapours they are and vapourous is their talk,
And like frost fogs they cling. O Madam, I
Have suffered much from Princes: I have been
Shot at, beleaguered by a host of fools,
Wearied to death by vain attacks, too strong
For capture, but too worn-out for defence.

QUEEN RIQUET.

That suffering may be borne; at least, 'tis life.
You should be gayer. Beauty, wit and youth
Make your life threefold sunshine, and your days
Blossom with roses.

CALLISTA.

But I cannot love
These ghosts of men, and I am troubled sore
By my impatient heart that now desires
To love a little.

QUEEN RIQUET.

Would that I were young,

And had your trouble tenfold. Impatient!
True sorrow has but one grey child, 'tis patience.

CALLISTA.

Yet I have pain, heigh ho! my life is tired.

QUEEN RIQUET.

So sighs, so sings the Zephyr that has played
With its own reckless will among the flowers,
And wearies of them.

CALLISTA.

Well, is that not pain?

QUEEN RIQUET.

No, it is pleasure hungering for fresh food,
A restless gadfly eager in its quest.
You give, but have no pain. True pain is quiet,
A dark lagoon kept clear by a great stream,
Within whose grave is drowned, deep as the night
The once so peopled country of dead love.

CALLISTA.

That should be pitiful; but I whom Love
Has never injured, do not know its pain.

QUEEN RIQUET.

Love brings the patience that can sound the depths
Of the pain it makes.

CALLISTA.

That patience is not mine.
My ship of life sails on the gleaming seas.
I hate the dull lagoons. Why should I look
Into dark pain?

QUEEN RIQUET.

Because you make its power
To slay the conscience. O it would be well
Could you but see yourself—a thoughtless woman,
Who finds a pleasure in the pain she gives
If but she feel her power.

CALLISTA.

That is untrue.

QUEEN RIQUET.

To seeming, not to fact. Lightly you fling
Your promise, then, the end being won, your mood
Changes, and laughs away the pledge, and claims
Change as a sacred right. There's nothing right,
Or wrong, but in your will; and Will in you
Is slave to passing impulse.

CALLISTA.

O Madam,
I may be wayward, 'tis a woman's right:
But I have not done this. It is not you
That speak so bitterly, but some strange sorrow
That in you poisons justice. [*The* QUEEN *walks aside.*]
Stay, why leave me.

QUEEN RIQUET.

[*Aside*] I'll touch her heart to the quick, if heart she have.
She shall remember how she struck my son.
[*Aloud*] Sorrow? O aye! But you—What pain has touched you
For one short hour? Its slightest sting made life
A bed of thorns; its visit was incredible.
And did it linger, careless of your wonder,

Then followed swiftly the impatient rage
Of baffled will—or if another's pain
Pressed on your joy, or hurt your ease, or claimed,
When you were cold, a word of help—you flung
The importunate away, although he gave you
Your very soul.

CALLISTA.

What do you mean?

QUEEN RIQUET.

Ask your heart,
Ask heartlessness—Ask my son—
O Callista,
Men fight with chance when they contend with women.
When we are young, we know not what we do,
Nor what the wounds we make—Had I not been
So early wrought by love to hopeless sorrow,
Myself had been indifferent through joy,
And broken lives like you.
But why, uncourteous,
Speak to you thus?

CALLISTA.

Nay, Madam, I can bear it,
And it seems truly said.

QUEEN RIQUET.

If I could think
You meant that word—But no, I will not speak,
Save but to say farewell. See, I have letters here
That call me home. To-morrow I must leave
This courteous dwelling where you've kindly spun
The threaded days I've lived too much in sorrow.

CALLISTA.

Ill news! Dear Madam, stay. I am, perhaps,
Too gay for your grief; or has observance failed,
In any point neglectful? Trust me, I
Have loved and reverenced you.

FIRST PRINCE (*rushing in*).

O bright Princess,
We hope you'll hear our song. It tells of you,
Flying like Dian through the woods, and horns
Blowing around you in the morning air,

Dew on your silver feet, your glorious face
Lit with the ardour of the chase, while high
Your white arm holds the bow, and all the wood
Rings with the shiver of its loosened string;
And the stag leaps in the air, and falls down, dead,
Pierced through its beating heart.

CALLISTA (*to the* QUEEN).

Madam, pardon
This princelike rudeness; couched in words that make
Endurance faint.
[*She turns to the* PRINCES] I will not hear your song,
And were I Dian, you should meet the fate
Actæon met. Unlawfully he dared
To see divine delight, and you have dared
To steal upon the goddess Poesy,
And rob her of her chaplet. Songs are made
By poets, not by princes; seek a poet,
Ask him to write your song and I will hear it.

SECOND PRINCE.

Callista!

CALLISTA.

Callista! Love alone, fair Sir,
From me, and not from you, permits that name.

SECOND PRINCE.

Then Princess, be true woman, and more kind.
When first we knew you, like a sparkling stream
Your manner flowed, but now it foams and glooms
A mountain torrent.

CALLISTA.

[*Aside*] Would it could sweep them off
To their dull native sea. [*Aloud*] I cannot help it.
It is full noontide, gentlemen. The sun,
And you, have made me languid. Let me rest,
Here by the fountain, and meantime compose,
Since it delights you, songs of faded love
Upon the flowing of my manners, which
It wonders me you praise, for in good truth
I am very weary—not of you, but of
This dull, dim world. [*Exit* CALLISTA.

FIRST PRINCE.

I think she mocks too much;
We waste our time upon a heart as hard
As the diamond in her ear.

SECOND PRINCE.

If you will break
This wooing, so will I, and suddenly
Leave her alone without one sighing suitor
To whisper her of love. Proud as she is,
She will not like that solitude. We are
The last of a hundred wooers who were drawn
To her great beauty, and driven to flight at last
By her quick-stabbing tongue.

FIRST PRINCE.

We will take leave
Of the King to-morrow, and bestow our hand
On gentler women in another land.

[*Exeunt* PRINCES.

QUEEN RIQUET alone. Afterwards LANVAL.

QUEEN RIQUET.

The year has gone to-day; O I have kept

Religious count of every hour, and dropt
Each like a tear upon Time's rosary,
Heavy with hope and fear. I waked at dawn,
And I have watched since then with eye and ear
As strained as the wild sentinel's that looks
Forth from the hunger-ravaged town for help—
Restless as he, and wandering from despair
To piteous hope. Fly quickly, laggard steeds,
That linger in the sky, and bring the eve
That haply brings my son, my only son.
Great Mother Earth, so kind to life and death,
Make smooth his path to me, pour roses on it,
And dusk violets : pity my motherhood,
Give me back my son. In vain, in vain I cry !
The dreadful fate that rules our little day
Smiles when it strikes ; cruel is life, more cruel
Love ! Where art thou, my son ? So far, so silent,
Cold, dead, or dead to me ; for weary years
Lost in the Faeryland. I have not sung
Since last I saw him : my very throat was choked
With lonely tears ; and then, the song I sang
Foretold ill, wrought by love. But singing now
Comes, rushing whence I know not to my lips ;
An air Gentilla taught me once, and I
Sang to the words he made I loved so well,

Of twain who, parted, met in joy at last
After great sorrow. I will sing it now,
And the gods grant it ominous of joy.

Song.

They loved when Summer's leaves were green,
They parted when the Autumn died;
But both were true to what had been,
Through many a weary winter-tide.

The tidings came that he was dead,
And round her Heaven and Earth did swim:
'I will not die, she gently said,
Lest I should not remember him.'

She lived, and love within her bore
So noble and so sweet a sway,
That still her cheek and bosom wore
The fulness and the bloom of May.

And he, made captive by the Moor,
For five long years so kept the truth
Of love's imagination pure,
He never lost the grace of youth.

They met: 'The years are but a dream,
We are unchanged,' they softly sung,—
And the woods answered, and the stream—
'Love keeps its faithful ever young.'

LANVAL *(entering).*

Madam, I heard a voice that oft has soothed
My petulance with sweetness, and I dared
To break upon your solitude.

QUEEN.

I am glad
To see you, Lanval, for you know my grief.

LANVAL.

Each heart, my Queen, has its own secret sorrow
With which no stranger meddles; I have mine.
I would I knew its cause, could find and grasp
The thing itself. But I have lived so sunk
In dreams, so deep in shadowland, that when
I touch on truth, I seem within a mist.
The world I imaged out of Nature was
The world I loved, not Nature; and the Beauty,
Of which Callista is the imperfect shadow,

Was my reality. Woman herself,
And all the fancy men call love, were clouds,
And so were all the passions of mankind,
And all their aims—clouds that passed o'er my sky,
Shadows my own soul cast upon the world,
Inventions like the figures of my art.
But now, I have lost that old ideal life,
Nor have I found the other. Woe is me!

QUEEN RIQUET.

You have lost your sunny temper. It may be
That love at last has seized you. Has Callista
Made inroad on your heart? You bear some marks
Of the love-frittered man;—an unrested face,
An eye that looks within, a trembling lip,
An air, among a crowd, as if you had been
Left desolate; and yet you wear them not
As the true lover wears them; they are touched
With a quaint irony and amused self-wonder.

LANVAL.

Madam, my fancy like a humming-bird,
Flutters around the flower called Callista.

QUEEN.

No more than that! Then you are not love-wrought,
Only prepared to love.

LANVAL.

I cannot tell,
I never seem to realise my mood.
But this I know that she has driven my life
Out of its joy and calm. She flurried me,
Played to and fro before me like a leopard,
Until I liked the play; and I have been
The ball she sported with, till the quick way
She tossed me pleased me; then, I wrought her face
Upon the canvas with such ardent study,
Joy, and imagination, that my heart
Thrilled to her beauty as Olympus thrills
When Apollo sings in heaven. I am troubled—
Touched, it may be, with Cupid's wandering arrow.
You know what love is—tell me, is this love?

QUEEN.

No, wandering Fancy. The true lover knows
The instant that he loves; that burning god

Brings with him his own knowledge. Yet you might
By labour on these thoughts arrive at last
To love Callista. Do not love her, she
Is bound to Riquet—O my son, my son!

LANVAL.

Madam, be patient; the great Gods are kind,
And pity motherhood.

QUEEN.

I have no patience:
I am weary waiting. I have borne my pain
Till its suspense has worn me like a garment
Thick-fretten by the moth.

LANVAL.

Think not so deeply.
Behind a tyrant thought lies madness couched,
Waiting its hour to spring. Think of the pain,
Beyond yourself, that fills the heart of the world,
And you will bring a medicine to your own,
Unloose the knot of madness in it, and
Enable Hope. Give me some help; I am
Confused with fancy.

QUEEN.

Is there no woman here
Whom you could love, whose gracious hand might lead
Your wayward spirit home? A quiet love,
Made strong by custom, passion at peace, would deepen
The colour and glow of life. Too much your art
Has thought, too little felt.

LANVAL.

It may be true.—
There is one here who often has observed me,
Done me much kindness, and if eyes speak truth,
Desires my love. A face that sleeps and dreams,
But flashes into beauty when I come;
And all her ways most like the brook that runs
Athwart the beech grove near our palace, o'er
Its pebbly bed, heard, in the pause of the wind,
A low sweet voice of welcome to surprise
The traveller to tender thought.

QUEEN.

Then seek her,
And swiftly do your wooing. When a man
Shows that he loves, all women hate delay.

LANVAL.

I'll speak at once. Words fix the half-shaped thought
Into the thing, and when I say I love—
Then, I shall love, and know it, and my life
Glide out of dreams.

QUEEN.

Yes! and return with me
To-morrow, home. You loved my son: I need
Some one to speak of him and comfort me.
If Riquet be not here to-night, he is dead.

LANVAL.

The Prince will come: I'll stake Callista's picture
Against the village sign-board that to-day
You meet him well and happy. Had you seen
His radiant face when he took leave of me,
You would have known no death could touch his life,
And no defeat his love. He will—
But why
Stand you so rapt as if you heard in the air
Titania singing?

QUEEN.

Hark, hear you nothing?

LANVAL.

Only the rustling limes.

QUEEN.

I hear a music
That when a girl I sang among the woods
With bright Gentilla—that old fairy song]
You heard me singing when you came to me.
O joyful omen! 'Tis Gentilla's voice
Telling of comfort. I shall see my child.
Riquet is near.
Make haste to win your love.
It will delight the Prince to find you captive.

[*Exit* QUEEN.

LANVAL.

Delight him! yes, but me! And yet I am drawn
Most strangely to it, and I see her face
Light up with joy, and joy is loveliness—
And lovelier perhaps, oneself its cause.—
I thought 'twas difficult, but now I find
To love is easy if one has a mind.

[*Exit* LANVAL.

SCENE II.

GLADE and FOUNTAIN, as in Act II. Scene II. FAIRIES are heard singing, and when the song is over, CALLISTA speaks behind the Scene.

Fairy Song.

FROM the palace and lawn bring her soft as a fawn,
And as swift, through the ilex grove;
By the stream, through the dell, lead her steps by the spell
That King Oberon made for his love;
Till her heart and her head with its magic be fed.—
Flowers of the Spring, enchant her along,
O follow, Callista, follow our song.

She has heard, and her feet with the music are fleet,
Though none of our words be known;
She has passed o'er the stream in a wonder and dream,
To the glade where he waits her alone.
And her eyes are on fire with the glow of desire.—
Wind of the Pines, the enchantment prolong,
O follow, Callista, follow our song.

CALLISTA.

How close the trees stand here; they grow as thick
As thoughts in my soul—
This way the music was,
Here is the light and air!
[*She enters the Scene.*] O beautiful!
This silent cirque of grass where loneliness
Sits throned by the stream, and hears, with veiléd eyes
The silver-sliding water chafe the flowers
That chide it in return.
[*She comes up to the fountain.*] I have stolen away,
Alone, from their dull love, and fancy-wrought,
Have wandered here by airy singing led.—
I do not know this grove. How quietly
Its meadow rests, rejoicing in deep peace.
The sunlight is so gentle, it must love
This little lonely dwelling-place of Nature;
And all around, afar, the dark-plumed pines
Murmur, and soft repeat from grove to grove
The stories of the wind.
'Tis a strange place.
How like a living thing aware of me,
It looks on my face! And surely I have seen

This fountain in forgotten dreams, and heard it
Whisper my name—The glade sees, hears, and speaks!

FAIRIES are heard singing.

Sisters, sweep around, around,
She has reached the fated ground;
Weave about her heart the spell
Of Love's eternal miracle.

CALLISTA.

Music again, a song that speaks of love!
How is't with me to-day? My heart beats fast;
A soft enchantment steals through me like dew
In summer through a rose. This place is full
Of human tenderness: one who loved much
Has left the longing spirit of his love
Among these trees and rocks, and the stream's voice
Whispers his secret. Would that he were here!
For he had passion, and I, wearied out
With faded wooing, am ready to give love,
Were I but greatly loved. I will sit here
In the hushed afternoon, and sing the song
That Graciosa sang the night before
She gave herself away.

Song.

Deep falls the dark, I cannot sleep, mine eyes
Are filled with night:
Tell me, my maidens, in the eastern skies,
Is there no light?
Cry to the moon to sink her lingering horn
In the dim seas, and let the day be born
When Love and I,
All ecstacy,
Shall see him coming through the gates of morn.

Bid him bring rosemary that ever keeps
Remembrance true:
And myrtles gathered where warm Venus sleeps
In fragrant dew;
And marigolds that wed the burning sun,
And close to tell desire the day is done;
And full-blown roses,
Passion's posies,
To deck the room where we shall be at one.

Scatter the flowers, uplift the hymn, he comes;
O Paradise!
Before him sound the pipes and merry drums,
And in his eyes

The morning breaks, and elfin queens above
Stoop to his smile, and hear, like me, the dove
Brood in his voice
And sing—'Rejoice,
Come forth, my bride'—'I come, I come, my Love.'

How gloriously she sang it! Even I
Felt my blood thrill; and as I sing it now
All that I am, and the far woodland world
Glows with unwonted fire.

[*Noise underground.*

Why, what is this?
A festal noise; the earth shakes, and I hear
A crowd of voices, and the hurried steps
Of servants, clanging cymbals, and sweet flutes
That ring, and dulcimers, and now the swell
Of singing drawing near. What are the words?

Singing heard underground.

'Tis Prince Riquet's marriage day
And Callista is his bliss.

CALLISTA.

Callista! Riquet! who dares join those names?

RIQUET comes from behind the willow splendidly dressed.

RIQUET.

Princess, I.

CALLISTA.

You!—Sir Prince, it is ill done
To lure me here, and had I known the music
Led me to you—

RIQUET.

Unchanged in beauty—and
Unchanged in heart. It matters not; the hour
Has come when you will love me, and the year
Brought to my patience, joy.

CALLISTA.

It is not joy!
Nought but impatience stings me to recall
An hour I plunged into forgetfulness.

RIQUET.

It is an hour I lived by—night and day

In visions that bade Faeryland be dull,
I saw you, like incarnate Love, step forth
Into this woodland chapel, crying—I come—
To keep my word.

CALLISTA.

It should not be, I said.
It shall not be. It was not chivalrous then
To take me by surprise; it is not wise
To surprise me now, alone, in this wild glade,
With sudden talk of marriage. I wed one,
Who tore the promise that he forces on me
Out of my girlish misery, who took
The vantage of my dullness—nature's fault,
Not mine—to win the galling pledge he knew
I should, being wise, abhor!—You push me, Prince,
Beyond my courtesy—but, take the truth.

RIQUET.

A sad truth, were it true. But Faeryland,
Nay, Love has doomed you mine.

CALLISTA.

You think that Love

Is wooed and won by a spell! Great Jove himself
Cannot command it; 'tis as proud and free
As that wild eagle from the mountain crag
That soars in the cloud.

O shame! a man should call
No foreign help to win a woman's heart;
Nor shall you change my will against your love,
Deep-rooted as these pines.

RIQUET.

And so is mine—
Rooted in love, and though your stormy eyes
Flash, lightning through rain, upon me, and your voice
Make thunder of its music—I will claim
That long-lost promise.

CALLISTA.

Prince, your wit is cold;
A woman's memory lies in her desire.
I have no care for you, and I deny
Your right to memory when I forget.

RIQUET.

Could I forget—there are no rights in love.

It knows no reason, and it lives beyond
Duties, and forms of courtesy, and law.
All the world's rules are dead while I stand here,
In this lone glade still haunted by my passion,
Where, driven from you by fierce despair that day,
And near this rock round which the wave is looped,
As all my life round you, I cast myself,
Torn with wild pain, and my hot tears fell fast,
Swelling the stream. Most bitter was the hour—
And yet so full of love that half the joy
Of the whole world was not so rich in life
As that heart-rending sorrow. Here I drew
Your picture from my breast, kissed it, held it
Close to my heart, and cried—'My love, my love!
Found only to be lost'—'twas here I stretched
My arms into the cold and empty air,
Crying your name to the unpitying trees,
And the chill moon, chill as your heart, and heard
Only the lonely ripple of the stream
Bid me be desolate; until at last,
When in my jealous and reproachful passion
I falsely called you false, a faery sleep
Veiled me from sorrow, and I dreamt and knew
Within my dreams you should be mine at last;—
And mine you shall be. Love will make you mine.

CALLISTA (*aside*).

Would he were not so frightful, for the man
Speaks well. This is true passion, and its note
Is music in my ear.
[*Aloud*] Prince, when I wed,
I hope the man may have a tongue as sweet,
And eyes and love as ardent as your own.

RIQUET.

There is none shall have you, none, but I. You know
Nothing of Love's great power, nor how he sits
Like a young orator upon my lips,
And flames a magic fire in my eyes,
And if you willed it, soon would flow a stream
Of beauty through me, shaping the shapeless,
Making the ugly fair.

CALLISTA.

Would that were true!
Then I would keep my word.

RIQUET.

Then make it true.

Do you disdain my ways, my voice, my eyes;
Or is it only this deformèd shape,
The streaming tuft of hair, my stature bent
Into a bow? My self, my love, my soul,
Are they detested? Were I tall, and shaped
As clean as he to whom you gave your sister,
And young with beauty as Apollo's eyes,
When first he struck the shell—then could you love me?

CALLISTA.

A maiden may not hastily say yes.

RIQUET.

To wait a tedious year is not to haste.

CALLISTA.

I have not waited, Prince, I have forgotten,
My promise, you, all things, but that I lived,
And loved my life.

RIQUET.

You could not quite forget.

Unbidden memories of my love that day,
The scene itself, my pleading, and your word,
Fled o'er your heart like swallows on the wing,
And dipped into its lake and ruffled it.
Hour after hour. You scorned them, but they lived.
And midst the crowd of soft and shallow men.
Whose wooing had no heat, you thought at times
Of the dim grove of ilex where you heard
Words woven through with fire—O could you love
The soul by which I speak, awhile forget
My shapeless form, one tender word of yours
Would change my body as I changed your mind.
This is the secret that Gentilla told me
In that far faery world where I have been.

CALLISTA.

Is it truly so?—I like your company:
And I might love you well, perhaps, if I
Could see you changed a little.

RIQUET.

Wish it then,
Let the air hear it, and the spell will work.

CALLISTA.

Then I should pledge myself.

RIQUET.

Not more than I
Think you were pledged before. Yet stay, take back
Your promise; take it, be as free as air
On mountain-tops; and when you have changed me, choose,
Or leave my love, but wait no longer now:
When Love is at the door, O let him in.

CALLISTA.

Then with my heart I wish you half as fair
As I have found your soul—

[*A mist rises from the stream and shrouds* RIQUET.

Where is he gone?
Prince, Prince, come back to me. What! is my voice
Dull in your ears? Riquet! Come ere I die.
O I have lost the truest heart in the world.

[*The mist gradually lifts, and* RIQUET *appears a young and noble knight.*

RIQUET.

Do not start back, nor press your heavenly hand
Over your eyes. It is I; Riquet, your love.

CALLISTA.

My sight dazzles.

RIQUET.

And mine, my eyes are blind
With love; speak to me, lest I die of hope.

CALLISTA (*drawing near*).

I cannot speak.

RIQUET.

But your eyes speak.

CALLISTA.

Do they?
Then answer them.

RIQUET.

O here, here in my arms;—
Close, close to my heart; look at me, smile on me

CALLISTA.

All my life long!—And are you truly Riquet?
I think that I have loved you from the first.

RIQUET.

What! when you banished me?

CALLISTA.

Ask me no more;
What matters that dull time, or what I was
So long ago. I love you now, and since
My head was on your breast, eternity
Has come and gone.

RIQUET.

And I forget the pain
Of the fretted years, when from your eyes' deep wells
I see Love rise, and in his hand the rose
Of perfect joy.

CALLISTA.

Do you see only love?
This little pool, where underneath the rock
The water sleeps, holds not more faithfully
Your living beauty than my eyes and heart.
Look, cling to me, and look.

RIQUET.

O happy change
That makes me worthier you! How fair your face
Smiles in the azure vault of heaven that shines
Deep in this water-world.

CALLISTA.

Look, look no more
Upon the unanswering water—look at me;
Into the depths of my dark eyes where love
Quickens the colour into speech, until
The image of your beauty mirrored there,
At home within me and for ever mine,
Leap into ardent life. Youth on your lips
Sings like a god, and Love's sweet-flowered thoughts
Inspire your face, and make your kiss a world

Of unimagined joy: and your bright head,
Set on its mighty shoulders like a city
In sunlight on a hill, is worthy lord
Of limbs so wrought and stature so divine
You seem a king of men, all armed to conquer
The willing world, as you have conquered me.
These you might see,—but not the enchanting light
In which you stand, the light of my first love,
The glory and the rapture and the hope,
That make your presence passion and life and peace.—
Why do you change, why grow so ghostly pale?

RIQUET.

It is the passionate rush of joy: all life
Streams like a sea to my heart, and fills its wells
O'erfraught at last: kiss me, and it will stream
Back to my lips, seeking its home. O think,
How lonely and how poor my life, and now
How richly lodged; think, I have never known
Till now what love might be. I cried for it
In the night of life: its light was never mine.
I dreamed its joy, but all my dreams are dull
To the impassioned truth. Do I grow pale?
It is no wonder; I have never seen

A woman look on me with love, and now,—
You love me.

CALLISTA.

I am glad you never loved,
Glad that no woman loved you. You are mine,
Mine wholly. There is no past in your thoughts,
No image shadowing mine, no room in your heart
Where memories are stored, locked up from me,
No hateful touches of a bygone world,
To mingle with my love. Alone I fill
Your life, and I will keep it mine alone—
Nay, I will clasp you in the very grave.

RIQUET.

Your words glow, and your eyes. O how I love you!
How beautiful you are within my heart!—
Were I to die, the very flowers above
My dust would breathe of you. But I shall live—
Live folded in imperishable joy.

CALLISTA.

Well spoke my sister I should not be wise
Until I loved. There is more wisdom shrined

In one deep longing of my heart for you,
Than in the wit of the whole world.

RIQUET.

And I,
By love made wise before, am wiser now
By the joy of love. Hark, hear you not the rushing
Of Love's immortal spirit through the world?

CALLISTA.

I hear, I hear—
As the earth at sunrise, so my life is changed.
Why is the whole world new?

RIQUET.

The passionate heart
Makes all things new; Love sees a thousand things
Knowledge is blind to; look upon this glade,
Your eyes have only seen it, not your heart;
Look now and tell me what you see.

CALLISTA.

I see
The beauty of the trees and stream.

RIQUET.

No more?
Look through the spirit of your love.

CALLISTA.

O stay;—
I see the living Beauty of the world
Moving, a forming Spirit, through earth and air,
And kindling love; and all the quick-winged fays
That do the Spirit's bidding; some attend
On the thin blades of grass, and lift the heads
Of flowers o'ercharged with dew; and others flit
Round the huge pillars of the high-branched pines
And keep their armour gleaming—beautiful Love
Tending on knightly Strength—and soft the murmur
Of multitudinous delight that fills
The fragrant palaces above. O music
Ripples through wood and wave—I hear the laughter,
Sweet as joybells, of the fine spirits that live
Sphered in the sailing bubbles of the stream!
And every cloud that the strong driver, Wind,
Urges athwart the sky, glows with the wings
Of an elfin host: the sunlight is their food,
Which as they fly they drink. The world I thought

Dead in its beauty, trembles like a woman
With the deep life of joy and thought and love.—
But tell me, Riquet, for men say you know,
Why in the sunshine I can see the elves—
I thought the night was theirs.

RIQUET.

The greater spirits
Are children of the moonlight. These are not
Titania's fairies, but the living things
Which are the thoughts and loves of Nature.

CALLISTA.

Then,
We are of their joyful company; they seem
To live by one another's love, and so do we.
It is a wondrous world, but all its wonder
Is nothing to the marvel of warm love
Filling my heart. Oh, I am happy now
That I am beautiful! Tell me I am fair.

RIQUET.

Fair as immortal Beauty when she sprang
Out of sea-foam and fire.

CALLISTA.

Hush! what is that?

RIQUET.

Nothing. The forest is as still as death.

[*They listen.*

CALLISTA.

I hear the tumult of the hunt draw near,
Men shouting, clamouring dogs, and sounding horns,—
The stag is driven to bay. They will come here;
I would we were alone.

RIQUET.

And so do I;
But it is happier to meet them thus,
In the sweet air and open heaven, than housed
In the Palace hall. Nor need we hope in vain
For quiet hours, since in the golden land
Where we and Love are wandering now, we are
Always alone; none sit beside its streams,
Nor tread its forest paths, but you and I;
And its wild sanctuary where our passion meets
And marries, is not of this world at all.

CALLISTA.

How well you speak, but still I want my will.
Shall we like lapwings fly and nest ourselves
In mossy quietude? I know a dell
Sunk in the wood's heart like my heart in yours,
All starred with lonely violet and primrose,
Where we can talk till evening.

RIQUET.

No, our fate
Holds to this glade. It is our bridal day,
And in the fairy palace underground,
Gentilla waits us soon.
The music hushed
While we were speaking now breaks out again;—
Listen, it is the marriage march of Oberon;
Music triumphant as the sun when night
Flies dizzy down the western steep: tramp, tramp,
How gloriously it goes; from every side
It brings us friends. That shout to the north proclaims
The stag is dead, and from the south I hear
Footsteps and singing.

CALLISTA.

That is Lanval's voice!
I know the air, it is a song he learnt
From an old gardener; so at least he said.

LANVAL (singing in the distance).

Lily white and tall she goes,
On her cheek the thornless rose.

RIQUET.

It is my childhood's song, I love it well;
I heard it on the day I knew you lived,
And saw your picture; you shall come and see
Those gardeners; both have loved me long. Alas!
You cannot know the poet whose sweet thought
Made me this song, but you shall see his grave,
Under the aspen, near the bubbling brook
That feeds our shadowy lake, and plant with me
A flower on his breast—They come, the glade
Is circled with their voices; here's the King,
My Father—draw back.

The hunt breaks into the glade.

KING RIQUET.

Ouf! a pushing wood;
And what a pretty place, and prettier made
By handsome people. Why, it is Callista.
Who is it with her? He's a stately presence;
Some wooer, doubtless, and if looks win girls,
Likely enough to win. Would Heaven I had
As tall a son!

RIQUET (*coming forward*).

My Father.

KING.

Who is it
That calls me Father? I have no son that stands
Thus, like a King.

RIQUET.

Yet it is I, Riquet,
Your son, straight as your spear.

KING RIQUET.

A sorry jest!
I am old, but yet I have not lost the will

To take the saucy blood from boys who play
With a father's sorrow.

CALLISTA.

Sire, it is your son,
Prince Riquet, whom I love.

KING RIQUET.

You too, Princess,
I have played with you and jested, as old age
May with a pretty maid, but this light talk
Suits not with courtesy, and my poor son
Is dear to me.

[*He turns to* RIQUET *and speaks aside to him.*]

Sir, we will talk together,
Ere evening fall, and here. I'll bring this sword,
I won at your age in a cause for kings,
Slaying a dragon brood. Were you my son,
You would know the blade.

RIQUET.

I have kissed it often

In the old hall; there's not a knightly deed
Done with it in the wars the tale of which
I could not tell: Father, put it by. I am
Indeed your very son. Love and Gentilla
Have wrought this wonder. Welcome Callista,
Kiss her, your daughter. Sir, I am drowned in joy.
Speak, Father, speak, say you are glad: I know
You love me well.

KING RIQUET.

It cannot be; too long
I have hoped in vain, you cannot be my son.

RIQUET.

Blind to good fortune, keen to see the ill,
What can convince you? Look into my eyes.
You ought to know my voice, and see this ring,
You placed upon my hand that stormy day
I drew my bow and slew the boar whose tusk
Rushed its white lightning near your fallen head;
And saved your life, like the poor mouse the lion.

KING RIQUET (*throwing his arms round* RIQUET).

Riquet!—My son;—Tall, handsome, and in love!

Glad! I am wild with joy—Bring in the stag;
We will divide it here, blow loud the horns,
And sound the hallali! Bridegroom and bride
Are matched like sun and shade.
[*He turns to* CALLISTA] Fairest of foes,
A Father claims his kiss.

LANVAL is heard singing without the glade.

Fairies that in flowers dwell
Make my darling love me well.

KING RIQUET.

Who sings in the wood?

LANVAL enters the glade.

Your painter, King. A goodly company
Comes after me.

Enter QUEEN, LADIES, and the rest.

QUEEN RIQUET.

Where are you, Riquet?
I cannot see. Where are you, my dear son?

RIQUET.

Here, Mother, in your arms; I went away—
Forgive me, I am happy.

QUEEN RIQUET.

Kiss me, my son:
Kiss me as oft I kissed you when you hung
Upon my heart, a little child, and stretched
Your hand to touch my cheek, and infinite love
Comforted me. I weep, but I am glad;—
Have we not dreamt that we were sorrowful?

RIQUET.

I have forsworn dreams. Turn, dearest Mother, thank
And bless Callista. See, she stands beside you.—
O love her for my sake.

QUEEN (*speaking to* CALLISTA).

I had lost my son,
And he is found again. I love you, daughter.
I am twice blessed, I have another child.

CALLISTA.

My mother! Oh, I am happy as the dawn
That shone when Love arose upon the world.

RIQUET.

Father, how came you here? We heard the hunt,
But thought you would not find us in this nook.

KING.

You hoped we should not find you, boy! We came,
Without our will. How is your mother here,
And Lanval too, and all this bridal crowd?
Our fairies are at work. The stag brought us.
We roused a monster, dusk, with mighty horns,
Whose shoulders dashed the underwood aside
As a broad ship the sea; he slew three dogs,
And turning stood at bay close to this glade,
Where the swift brook has worn away the clay,
And made a cave beneath the outgrasping roots
Of a vast pine. I, leaping forward, drew
My knife across his throat, when, through the shouts,
A strange, wild melody grew in the air,
That seemed to each of us, for so I heard,

The song he sang when first he loved, so sweet
That we forgot the hunt, and followed where
It lured us on enchanted, till at last,
Pushing the branches by, we found this place.

RIQUET.

This is Gentilla's doing.

LANVAL.

So it is;
She brought us here. I, wandering with this lady,
Now my affianced inspiration.

KING.

What!
Lanval and love, the sword and the scabbard joined.

LANVAL.

Even so my King; the falcon that in heaven
Was free as the wind it stooped on, is at last
Brought to the lure. See, Sire, is she not worth
A painter's eye?

KING.

Our Court will be the brighter
For this bright lady; but how came you here;
Was song your guide?

LANVAL.

We stood beside the pool,
Where the great chestnut shades it, talking as
Those talk who first know love's content. Suddenly,
We heard the Queen cry in the ilex grove,
And a sweet music, which we following, saw,
Floating before her under the dark trees,
The fairy of our house that beckoned us.
It was Gentilla. Through mazy paths we went,
These ladies with us, while I sang, and lo,
Upon the edge of this green glade, our guide
Vanished, and then his mother heard the voice
Of her lost son. She knew the voice, but joy
Stole all her strength; we waited, and I sang
Two words the Prince remembers. So we came.

RIQUET.

Yes, I remembered, did I not, Callista?

Fairies that in flowers dwell
Make my darling love me well—

In the old garden we shall sing it yet,
With joy, not longing. No need of fairies now
To make my darling love me.

LANVAL.

No, in truth!
For you, my Lord, said right.

CALLISTA.

What did he say?

LANVAL.

He said your beauty would excel itself
When once you loved. It has won quiet, and
Mingled with quiet, glow and life.
[*Turning to* RIQUET] My Prince,
You have no friend whose joy is more than mine.

RIQUET.

I know it, Lanval, you have always loved me.
My Father did not know me.

LANVAL.

I was more wise.
I knew those soft gray eyes where sleeps a fire.
Look at the Queen, her beauty has returned.
She seems a girl, and on her rested face
Happiness broods,—in all my work I know
Nothing more beautiful than joy—but see,
The King draws near to her.

KING.

Constance, my dear wife,
You had more faith than I. I do repent.

QUEEN.

My husband, I've forgotten all the past.

KING.

Not all! Not the long faithful love of years!
Forget the grief that wearied me too much,
Forget the blustering weather of my mood,
But let my home be still within your heart,
Whose air and light still breathe the sweet wild times
When first I loved you. I have suffered too;

Although I tried to dull the edge of pain
In hunting and in war. Sorrow too much
Has parted us; let joy unite us now.

QUEEN.

I knew you suffered; yet you will forgive
Grief's tyranny in me. Our world is new,
And you and I are happy as the day.
The past is buried deep, and all my songs
Shall tell of joy, and you shall hunt the woods
With Riquet and Callista—

KING.

And ere long
Dandle their children on our knees and play
With the kingdom's heir. He will be handsome.

QUEEN.

Yes, they are beautiful. Like sunshine, Love
Illumines them: the fountain where apart
They stand and talk, has not a fresher song
Nor are its waters purer than their hearts—
But we forget the rest, and Lanval too,
To whom we owe so much.

Lanval, come hither;
So you have done the deed: is this the Lady?

LANVAL.

Yes, though beset with fears. I think my life
Is crystallized already. Whether that
Bodes good or ill to work I do not know—
But see—There is Gentilla—King, my Prince,
Callista, Gentles all, bid hail the fairy.

GENTILLA enters, strikes the earth with her wand. It opens and discloses a great hall, filled with musicians, servants, &c., and laid out for the marriage feast. Joyous music.

GENTILLA.

All is over; I have kept
The word I gave when Riquet slept.
Take Callista for your wife; [*To RIQUET*]
Love her, guard her as your life.
Honour Riquet; on this ground [*To CALLISTA*]
Is no truer lover found.
He has made you wise, and you
Have made him beautiful in view;

But love did both—therefore above
All other things—hold fast to love.
And keep it gay, for life is short.
Sound trumpets, make the lovers sport.

[*GENTILLA leads the way into the hall. They all follow her while the trumpets are sounding, and the curtain falls.*]

THE END.

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